MARVEL SPOTLIGHT™

A Tribute To
Jack "King" Kirby!

JACK KIRBY

STAN LEE

A Full-Length Interview
With Stan Lee. 'Nuff Said!

RATED T+

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DIRECT EDITION

$2.99 US $3.75 CAN

PLUGGING IN THE SPOTLIGHT

World-famous cartographers have come together and mapped out all the hippest, zingiest, most happenin' places on the globe, and they've determined a new scientific fact: *Marvel Spotlight* is the place to be! Take it from your *Spotlight* editors, who work hard to bring you the straight scoop each and every month — this is an edition you'll want to keep and treasure for years to come! It's an edition destined to reach all-new heights of acclaim, causing such a stir and clamor among the comic-loving faithful that it will be decided by the masses assembled that a new epoch has begun: *It's the Marvel Age of Comics, brother!* In fact, it might be you that says it first — so say it loud and say it proud!

This month brings to you — the loyal *Spotlight* reader — profiles on two gentlemen without whom we would not be bringing you *Marvel Spotlight!* Heck, set aside the humble environs we've got going here in these pages — we wouldn't have the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Hulk, Captain America, Daredevil, the X-Men, Iron Man, or even Irving Forbush without the two legends profiled in this month's *Spotlight!* "Awright, awright!," I can hear you thinking. "Quit with the high-falutin' hype and spill the beans! Who are you talking about?"

Stan and Jack is who we're talking about! STAN AND JACK!!!!

First up is our book-length interview with **STAN LEE**. Well, we say book-length, even though it's only half the book, because there's so much there we crammed as much as we could into the space allowed — and darned if it doesn't feel like a history book of the highest order! Sit back and enjoy reminiscing with Stan about his favorite subjects — Marvel comics, his career in writing and publishing, his new projects (including *Stan Lee Meets*), and perhaps his favorite subject — himself! (You better believe it!)

The next half of the book is built around the legacy of **JACK KIRBY** — the man they call "King." Why do they call him King, an honorific generally reserved for hereditary rulers? We pulled in folks who would know exactly how to answer such a question, folks who've known him and worked with him and loved him…folks like his daughter Lisa Kirby — writer of the new Marvel Icon series titled *Jack Kirby's Galactic Bounty Hunters* — and Mike Thibodeaux and Steve Robertson, Lisa's collaborators on said Icon project.

We also got some time from Mark Evanier, who was Jack's longtime assistant and is now historian of Jack's legacy, to discuss Jack and his upcoming biography. And we also got in touch with Jack's original collaborator, Joe Simon, merely the gentleman who crafted some of the finest stories of Captain America of all time along with Jack!

If this testimony ain't enough to persuade you, well...I guess you're just going to have to buy the book and read it to find out for yourself! I'm pooped from trying to convince ya! But if you're a True Believer, a Mighty Marcher under the banner of Marvel, then you're not going to want to go home without this issue of *Marvel Spotlight!*

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MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

STAN LEE • OFFICIAL HANDBOOK

REAL NAME: Stanley Martin Lieber
NICKNAME: "The Man"
DATE OF BIRTH: December 28, 1922
PLACE OF BIRTH: New York City, NY
OCCUPATION: Comic book writer, entertainment producer
WEBSITE: www.stanleeweb.com
FIRST MARVEL COMICS APPEARANCE:
Captain America Comics #3, 1941

HISTORY: Stanley Lieber was born in New York City in 1922, the oldest son of Jewish immigrants from Romania. Upon an early graduation from high school, Stan found himself thrust into the post-Depression wartime economy. Through family connections, he was able to land a job with Martin Goodman's comic-book publishing start-up Timely Comics. Initially, he performed off jobs, assistant work and turned in small writing assignments. His youthful aspiration was to one day write the "Great American Novel," so when his first professional writing job came in the form of a humble two-page text story in *Captain America Comics #3*, he adopted a pseudonym: Stan Lee. This way, he could reserve the integrity of his real name for later use on that novel-to-be.

But it was the lowbrow comic industry that kept Stan Lee constantly employed. His proficiency on the job got him the position of managing editor at an extremely young age. He graduated from simple text pieces to full-length stories in *All-Winners, USA Comics*, and other Timely anthologies. His tenure in the '50s saw him expand the company (now called Atlas Comics) output to include more genre experimentation, with westerns, war comics, horror and crime comics.

All this activity was a prelude to the Marvel Age of Comics, ushered in under the auspices of Stan Lee and a small stable of his hand-picked artists, topped off by the formidable talents of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. Responding to Martin Goodman's challenge to do something to find a way to revitalize dwindling sales, Stan figured he would co-opt the successful super-hero revival at competitor DC Comics and add his own magic to the mix: Instead of being perfect invulnerable champions, Stan's Marvel Age heroes would be normal, fallible, imperfect people, forced to cope with their newfound superhuman traits just like the average person might.

Stan's innovation sent shockwaves through the comics fan community, and within a few years, Marvelmania was taking hold: unlike other fads of the time, it wasn't letting go. Under his direction, creations like *Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Thor, Doctor Strange* and *Incredible Hulk* flourished in the shared universe they inhabited. Stan developed the idea that these larger than life heroes would meet each other in crossovers from title to title, thus exploding the story possibilities for the kids who became eager fans.

In addition to bringing a new twist to the life of the super hero, Stan also brought the reader inside Marvel's "Batty Bullpen," creating a sense of camaraderie and special membership. His friendly and enthusiastic banter in letters pages, house ads, and Bullpen Bulletins brought Marvel Comics to a level of familiarity with their fans, that had kids and college students proudly professing themselves to be "True Believers."

At one time, Stan wrote every comic that appeared from Marvel during the 1960s. But when he was promoted to Publisher in 1971, his writing had to take a back seat, and by the mid-'70s, he semi-retired from scripting duties. He would often write for Marvel when the mood struck, including a Dr. Strange story in *Marvel Premiere #3*, a collaboration with Jack Kirby on a Silver Surfer graphic novel, and an ongoing series in the early-'90s called *Ravage 2099*. In 1977, Stan reunited with longtime Spider-Man artist, John Romita, to work on the syndicated Spider-Man newspaper strip. Over the years, Stan has returned to write scripts for the odd single issue or series, while focusing mainly on Marvel's ventures into television and movie development. Now president of his own POW! Entertainment company, Stan is currently presiding over the hit reality TV show *Who Wants To Be A Superhero?* To this day, he remains Marvel Comics' single greatest ambassador to the world.

THE MARVEL COMICS LIBRARY: SILVER AGE HEROES (1961-1973)

Amazing Fantasy #15
Amazing Spider-Man #1-100, 105-110, 116-118
Avengers #1-34
Captain America from Tales of Suspense #59–85, 87-99
Captain America #100-109, 112, 114-141
Captain Marvel from Marvel Super-Heroes #12
Daredevil #1-9, 11-50, 53
Dr. Strange from Strange Tales #110-111, 114-128, 130-143, 147, 151-157
Fantastic Four #1-115, 120-125
Giant-Man & the Wasp from Tales to Astonish #49-68
Human Torch from Strange Tales #114-131, 133-134, Annual #2
Incredible Hulk #1-6
Incredible Hulk from Tales to Astonish #59-101
Iron Man from Tales of Suspense #47-51, 54-67, 69-72, 74-98
Nick Fury from Strange Tales #135-147, 150-152
Sgt. Fury #1-28
Silver Surfer #1-18
Sub-Mariner from Tales to Astonish #70-81, 83-92, 100
Thor from Journey Into Mystery #97-125
Thor #126-192

THE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW WITH STAN LEE

When I started reading comics in the late seventies and early eighties, Stan Lee was long gone from the day-to-day operations of Marvel Comics—no more the publisher, writer or editor that had defined the public's image of the company. That never stopped me from having the proper reverence for his role as the guiding force of the company that produced so much of my favorite reading material. How could it stop me? His work was still alive and selling to a whole new audience in the form of the reprint titles *Marvel Tales, Marvel's Greatest Comics* and *Marvel Super-Heroes,* to name a few. The stories of Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk and many more came alive to me as much—if not more—than the comics that were being newly published. And even though he wasn't writing much in the way of new stories, he was always there in the Bullpen Bulletins, writing his Stan's Soapbox features! So it was a really intimidating experience when I got the assignment to talk to one of my heroes, Stan Lee, a guy who was with me when I was first awakened to my love of comics. And to be honest, I was mortified.

STAN'S MIGHTIEST HEROES: Giant-Man and the Wasp, Iron Man, and Thor all had their own titles, while Captain America was fresh from an iceberg and Rick Jones was stuck with the Hulk! Put 'em all together and you've got one heckuva team: The Avengers!

STAN IN THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM: Stan's meeting with Dr. Strange is gorgeously rendered by Alan Davis in this original black-and-white art.

I shouldn't have been. I was told by many folks that had met him that in person, Stan is exactly like you'd imagine him to be: warm, welcoming, exciting and energetic. Truer words have not been spoken. From the moment that my interview partner, Justin Fairfax, and I entered Stan's plush digs at his POW! Entertainment office in Beverly Hills, we were "Face Front" with Stan's inimitable charm and enthusiasm. The interview was a total blast that lasted long past its original time limits, a graciousness for which Justin and I were extremely flattered. Stan was so into talking about his life at Marvel Comics that sometimes he could barely contain himself!

For example, there was one question asked in which Stan excitedly hopped up out of his chair and sprawled across his desk, so excited was he to be in the moment, talking about a subject he loves (in this case, it was being reminded of his talents at playing the ocarina!) So many of my dreams as a kid were fed by Stan's engaging personality, his wit and his unbridled fervor when communicating his ideas, and to be able to be seated with him was an honor I'll never forget. In fact, that's where our interview began, with our host offering us his recommendation for seat arrangements...

STAN: *(Welcoming us into his office.)* Each of you have a seat, or if I'm talking about you as a combination, seats, as the case may be. I like to be grammatically correct.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, we appreciate that.

STAN: And well you should. Now, what the hell is this all about?

SPOTLIGHT: Well, Stan, this interview is all about you.

STAN: Oh. I like that! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: We'd like to start with discussing the new *Stan Lee Meets* one-shots that you are writing for Marvel, in which you meet some of your most favorite creations, including Dr. Strange, the Thing, Silver Surfer, Spider-Man and Dr. Doom. Since you got to choose the five characters you were going to "meet", why did you choose those five in particular?

STAN: I really don't know. See, I wanted to make these stories funny. These are, I hope, funny stories. And I was thinking, "Who can I have the most fun with?" And I just got ideas for plots that would be funny for these five characters. If I had thought of a funny plot for Willie Lumpkin, I'd probably have picked him for one of them. But that's the only reason, just 'cause I thought that I could write a funny story with them. I think the readers will be very surprised, and I hope they'll be incredibly pleased when they read these stories. I know I will be! I laugh when I read them, and I'm the guy who wrote them!

SPOTLIGHT: Each of these one-shots have a cool layout. I mean, there's the main story that you wrote, where you're matched with some of the best artists that Marvel has today, and then there's a backup story written by people like Brian Michael Bendis and Joss Whedon, and these guys are all really excited to—

STAN: *(Interrupts.)* Joss Whedon is writing something for *Stan Lee Meets?*

SPOTLIGHT: He sure is.

STAN: Oh sure, they're gonna show me up! I gotta compete with Bendis and Whedon? Thanks a lot!

SPOTLIGHT: And they're also including a classic reprint written by you in each issue.

I think they're sticking the other stories in there at the end...but they've got your story up front!

STAN: Yeah, but the editorial note says, "Now read something good!" *(Laughter.)* Oh, boy. My luck.

SPOTLIGHT: You were there once—you helped write the book on these types of editorial decisions! *(Laughter.)* So when you get a chance to look at some of this artwork as it's coming in to you, from folks you've never collaborated with before, what were your reactions to it?

STAN: "Wow!" Well, I mean, the art is great. I just was so thrilled that they were able to get artists that good. It made it so easy; the better

STAN LEE MEETS

Five one-shots from Marvel telling humorous tales of the interactions between Spider-Man, Silver Surfer, Thing, Dr. Doom and Dr. Strange and the guy who helped create them!

the artwork, the easier it is to write this stuff. That's why my stories so often look good. Not that the stories were good, but Kirby was drawing them, Romita was drawing them, Buscema, Ditko … how could they not look good, you know? I could have written the alphabet and it would have looked like great literature with those artists.

SPOTLIGHT: So for your *Stan Lee Meets* stories, you wrote plot outlines, forwarded them to editor Tom Brevoort, who connected them with the artists; then the artists basically did Marvel method?

STAN: That's right. I may have written, "This is what I want on page one", or page two. But I didn't put all the copy in. I added that after the artwork came.

SPOTLIGHT: Right. Well, we spoke with Salvador Larroca last month for the issue we worked on that covered his art, and we talked with him about his work on *Stan Lee Meets Dr. Doom*. For him, this collaboration with you is a pinnacle of his career.

STAN: Oh, that was beautiful! Oh man, I loved that one.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, the editors agree. In speaking with them, they were telling me, "This is some of the best work Salva's ever done!"

artists all ready and lined up. You wouldn't have known who they were, either, but they would have been there, you know? So I wouldn't feel bad one bit that you can't keep up with all the folks that love you and your contribution to comics!

STAN: Well, that's really good to hear. You guys oughtta come and interview me more often. If you don't stop … I'm getting such a swelled head, but I love it! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Well, we're huge fans, so it'll take a lot of professionalism to get through the rest of this interview. *(Laughter.)* Is there anything else you'd like to say about *Stan Lee Meets?*

STAN: I gotta tell you, I love writing humor. I am so glad I had the chance to do *Stan Lee Meets.*

That's why my stories so often look good. Not that the stories were good, but Kirby was drawing them, Romita was drawing them, Buscema, Ditko…how could they not look good, you know?

STAN: Well, they'd better have been.

SPOTLIGHT: *(Laughter.)* Well, for such a short story, guys like Salvador have really showed up for the job. That must make you feel really good.

STAN: You know, one of the worst feelings about this whole thing … obviously when I was there at Marvel, I knew everybody. I had hired just about everybody, and I had worked with them. But now, I don't know these people! I mean, I read the names of artists and writers, and I've never met them! And I can't even identify them with the artwork, because I don't have time to read the comic books. So if someone says, "Oh, he's the guy who drew this thing in issue so-and-so", I still don't know, 'cause I haven't read it. So they're just names to me! So when I got the artwork finally, and saw how beautiful it was, I was impressed. But it's still like the art is done by strangers, 'cause I don't know the people, which, from my point of view, it's pathetic.

SPOTLIGHT: Pathetic? Well, can I give you my take on that?

STAN: Yeah.

SPOTLIGHT: Look: you are Stan Lee. That burden of knowing all and seeing all, you don't have to worry about that stuff. But for us, we feel like we know you – and that's your fault too, because that was one of your many contributions to comics was creating a synergy between the company and the fans. And we all - from the fans to the current creators - everybody feels like they know you and they love you, and so when they have the opportunity to show this, they come running. And so I'm sure that if Marvel couldn't have gotten these particular artists to fit this into their schedule, there would have been another hundred

I was afraid when I suggested it that they would say, "No no, we don't want that." But I told Tom Brevoort, "I'd like to take a funny approach, put myself in the story, meeting these guys, and make it as funny as I can," and he said, "Fine!" So I was thrilled … and if I ever came back to comics - which I wouldn't have time to do - these are the kind of stories that I would write. I would only write funny stories; I wouldn't write any more serious stuff.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, what do you think about the Marvel Masterworks library? Since 1987, Marvel has been slowly publishing all the old comics of Marvel's Silver Age, and recently they've really taken off and are nearing the point where most of your work will be reprinted in this hardcover library. Any thoughts about that?

STAN: Well, I love seeing them. I'm so impressed that these are referred to as Marvel Masterworks. You know, I think I made up that name.

SPOTLIGHT: You made up that name?

STAN: *(Laughter.)* I made up the name…

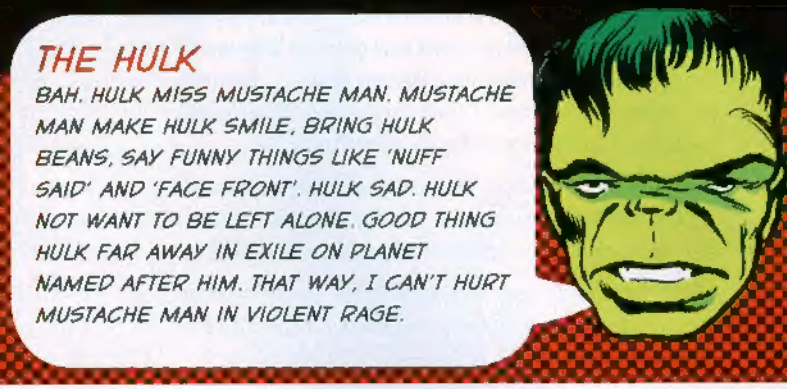
JUSTIN: It's got two M's in it…

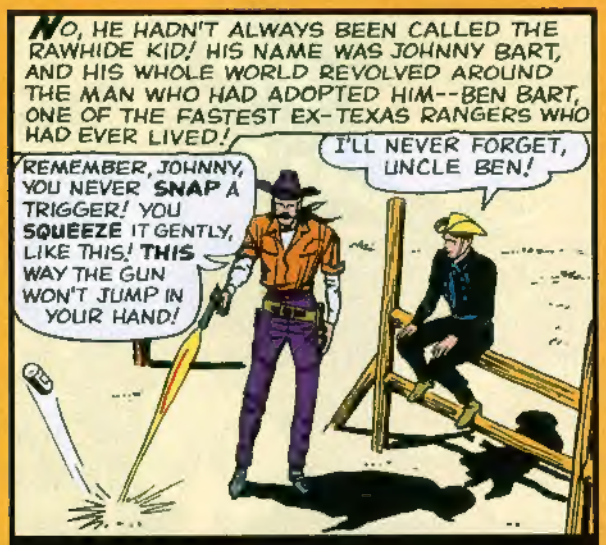
STAN: Yeah! I love those words that are, what's the term?

SPOTLIGHT: Alliterative.

STAN LEE SNUBS...

Sure, it's nice that Stan Lee decided to take time out of his busy schedule and meet five of his famous creations. But only five out of hundreds means there's a lot of resentful, angry and possibly vengeful characters out there that are chuffed at ol' Stan. Here are some of their emails to the Spotlight office.


THE HULK
BAH. HULK MISS MUSTACHE MAN. MUSTACHE MAN MAKE HULK SMILE. BRING HULK BEANS, SAY FUNNY THINGS LIKE 'NUFF SAID' AND 'FACE FRONT'. HULK SAD. HULK NOT WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE. GOOD THING HULK FAR AWAY IN EXILE ON PLANET NAMED AFTER HIM. THAT WAY, I CAN'T HURT MUSTACHE MAN IN VIOLENT RAGE.


NO, HE HADN'T ALWAYS BEEN CALLED THE RAWHIDE KID! HIS NAME WAS JOHNNY BART, AND HIS WHOLE WORLD REVOLVED AROUND THE MAN WHO HAD ADOPTED HIM--BEN BART, ONE OF THE FASTEST EX-TEXAS RANGERS WHO HAD EVER LIVED!
I'LL NEVER FORGET, UNCLE BEN!
REMEMBER, JOHNNY, YOU NEVER SNAP A TRIGGER! YOU SQUEEZE IT GENTLY, LIKE THIS! THIS WAY THE GUN WON'T JUMP IN YOUR HAND!

WITH GREAT POWER: Johny Bart lost his beloved Uncle Ben to low-down gunslingers on the western range, and would later have to flee the law as a wanted menace. Some of these concepts would later show up in the life of Peter Parker!

STAN: Alliterative! Alliterative, of course. *(Laughter.)* And when I get those Marvel Masterworks, and I put them on the bookshelf at home, it's thrilling. It really is! All these things that I did a million years ago...

JUSTIN: Masterworks are getting pretty close to getting all of your sixties super-hero work in hardcover. It's very close.

SPOTLIGHT: About four or five more Spider-Man books, a couple more FF books...

STAN: And then it'll be over. Then you'll have 'em all! Awww, gee.... And then you gotta start getting other people's stuff.

SPOTLIGHT: I know you do a lot of work writing the introductions.

STAN: That seems to be my biggest thing today.

SPOTLIGHT: When I was a kid, the concept of having all the earliest Marvel Comics available to read was just an alien thought. It never occurred to me to even wish for it!

STAN: I never would have guessed this would happen in a million years, that years later people would be collecting these. If I had known, I would have collected them. I would have saved them!

SPOTLIGHT: I know, and you were in a position to save a lot of them, too! *(Laughter.)* Well, one thing you had always said that struck me as funny was that you were saving your real name, Stanley Lieber, for when you were going to write the so-called Great American Novel. Technically, you never got around to writing a piece of prose that stood for that, but back in those early days, did you have anything in mind for what you wanted to write about?

STAN: Nothing at all.

SPOTLIGHT: Nothing at all?

STAN: In fact, even today I never know what I'm gonna write until I sit down to write it. *(Laughter.)* You see, the reason was, I wanted to do something good, something memorable; we all wish we could do something that'll make a... *(Pause.)*

JUSTIN: You could have written it about the human condition, or about war or something?

STAN: No. To be brutally honest, I wasn't even thinking of anything that exotic. I was just thinking, "I'd like to write something that will sell, and it'll make me famous." And comics were so—I won't say hated—but were so disrespected in those days, most parents didn't even want their kids to read comics. If ever anybody over the age of twelve or thirteen was seen with a comic you'd think there was something wrong with him, and people just had no respect at all for comics. So I felt, if I want to be a writer someday, I'd like to write a book! People respect people who write books. I didn't have any idea what I wanted to write about, and so I thought, "I'm gonna save my name"—and just jokingly—"for the Great American Novel."

But I found out that I don't have the temperament to write books, 'cause I get very—I don't know whether "bored" is the word—I don't really like to write until I'm in the act of writing. When I start writing I get very interested in it, but if I know I have to write something, I'll put it off 'til the last minute. So I'm really a hack writer. I write something when it has to be written, and I usually wait 'til the last minute. And I could never write a novel, 'cause the thought of sitting, and knowing I have three, four hundred pages to write—I'd never get started.

Now, friends of mine who are novelists have said to me, "Stan, you're a jerk. Just get an idea for a novel and write five pages a night! You could do that in a half hour. And do that every night!" And they're right, but I can't do it. So I realize that I should have kept my own name, because comic writing is perfect for me, 'cause I was able to write a book in a day, and then it was finished! Now the fact that I had to write another one the next day—I was too dumb to think of that, I just knew, "Boy, I wrote it fast, I'm finished! Great!" Next day was another project; I'd worry about that later. So I love things that I can write, and, by the time I get up from the typewriter—or now, the computer—it's finished. If it takes an hour, two hours, three hours, the point is by the time I go to sleep it's finished. And for some stupid reason I like that.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, one of the important elements of a great novel, or any piece of literature that will stand the test of time, is to create in it characterizations that a reader can learn something from and perhaps identify with and adapt into their own life. When you boil it down, it seems that you did, in essence, write at least that part of the Great American Novel with *Amazing Spider-Man.*

RAVAGE 2099

SO I HEAR OL' STAN IS GOIN' AROUND MEETING SOME OF "HIS FAVORITES", AN' I GET SNUBBED! THIS IS JUS' UNBELIEVABLE! YOU THINK HELLROCK IS BUSTING OUT WITH PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES EVERY MONTH? I COULD USE THE HELP, YA COCKAMAMIE MARVEL SUITS! LIFE'S BEEN LONELY IN 2099! 'COURSE, ALL I GOTTA DO IS WAIT. IT'S ONLY 93 MORE YEARS 'TIL MR. STANNY PANTS WON'T BE ABLE TO AVOID ME ANY MORE! I'LL SEE YOU IN 2099, BUNKY!

JUSTIN: The story of Peter Parker, how he went from nothing to becoming someone of great power and using it to help others, it fits in with this idea. It seems to me that *Amazing Spider-Man #1-100* is like one big novel of sorts. *Fantastic Four #1-100* is a novel….

STAN: I never thought of that.

JUSTIN: You know, it tells a grand story, even though it's not in your normal prose style.

SPOTLIGHT: And furthermore, specifically in regard to Peter Parker, you helped create an icon that resonates throughout all forms of literature, popular culture, and thinking about art. Everyone from comics fans to high-minded critics have responded to Peter Parker, have reflected on his rich legacy as a fictional character. Do you have any thoughts about that? I mean, do you consider that your great contribution to the world of writing?

STAN: I never think of it that way. I just figure I'm the luckiest guy in the world, that I wrote something that for some reason people seem to enjoy and remember and it's still around. As I've said so many times in so many interviews, all I was thinking of at the time I wrote was just, "I hope the books would sell". That way, I wouldn't be fired and I'd be able to pay the rent. And it never occurred to me, or to anybody else, I think, that people would collect them, and talk about them, make movies of them … maybe I woulda paid more attention if I'd thought of that. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Well, I hope perhaps your memory can handle this question, because it's kind of a specific question. There was a period of several months between when *Amazing Fantasy #15* came out, which featured the first appearance of Spider-Man, and when the first issue of *Amazing Spider-Man* hit store shelves. I know you had to wait a couple months to get sales figures that told you that had something popular with Spider-Man, but even with that there was still a several-month gap. Was that because you were taking a lot of care to finesse this character before you launched it? Was there any particular reason why that took a little longer than it seemed it should have?

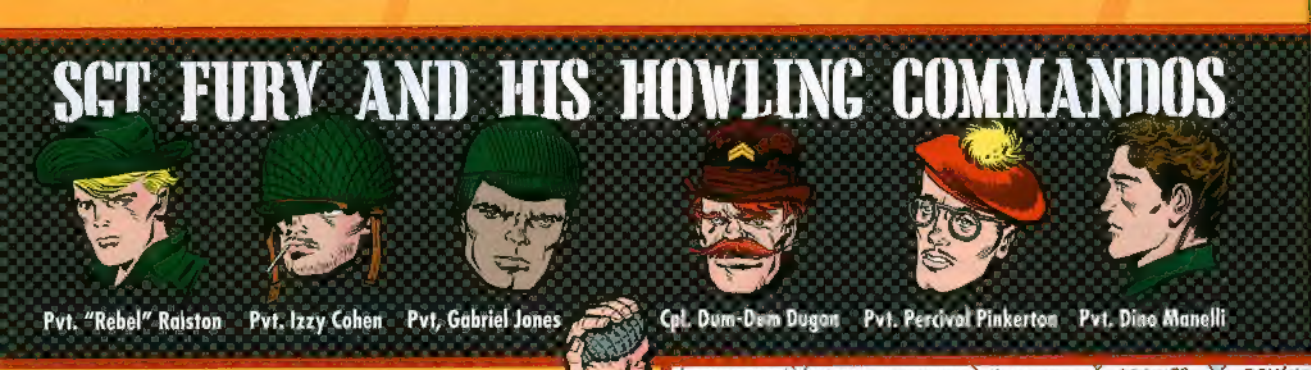
STAN: No—I don't remember, it could have been something as simple as my publisher, Martin Goodman, not being able to put it on the schedule because we didn't have a printer. You know, we had to wait 'til the printer had time for another book.

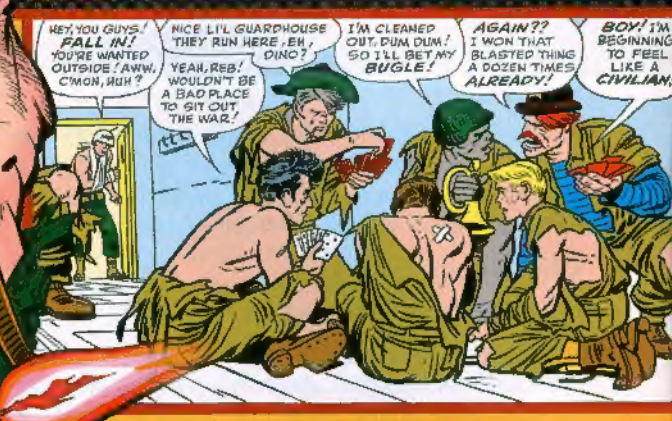
JUSTIN: And I remember that you were limited in the number of books that you could put out at that time, so you probably had to wait 'til a cancelled book could clear space on the schedule.

YOU DON'T THINK THESE THIN STRANDS CAN HOLD ME FOR LONG?
THEY'D BETTER! THAT STUFF'S EXPENSIVE! AND IT CAME WITH A THIRTY-DAY GUARANTEE!

SPIDER-MAN MEETS DAREDEVIL: Two of Stan's earliest creations mix it up in the pages of *Daredevil #16*, drawn by John Romita, Sr!

Jazzy John didn't know it, but this was his audition to take over *Amazing Spider-Man* from Steve Ditko!




HEY, YOU GUYS! FALL IN! YOU'RE WANTED OUTSIDE! AWW, C'MON, HUH?
NICE LI'L GUARDHOUSE THEY RUN HERE, EH, DINO?
YEAH, REB! WOULDN'T BE A BAD PLACE TO SIT OUT THE WAR!
I'M CLEANED OUT, DUM DUM! SO I'LL BET MY BUGLE!
AGAIN?? I WON THAT BLASTED THING A DOZEN TIMES ALREADY!
BOY! I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL LIKE A CIVILIAN.

STAN: Yeah. Yeah, could have been that, or it could have been that Steve Ditko wasn't able to start it right away …could've been anything. But as far as trying to refine the character before we launched him—I must tell you, it's a terrible thing to say—I never put any extra effort into anything. In other words, I never thought, "Boy, this is a more important book, so I'd better spend more time on it." I put as much effort as I could into everything I wrote, but I never took longer because I thought it was important.

JUSTIN: Not even the Silver Surfer?

STAN: No, I wrote that in the same amount of time. 'Cause the one lucky thing about me, I've always been a fast writer, and since I was always my own editor, I always loved what I wrote! *(Laughter.)* "Gee, that's great! Now I'll do the next page!"

JUSTIN: "A masterpiece!"

SPOTLIGHT: There's not a lot of Stan Lee outtakes, huh?

STAN: That's why they went quickly, 'cause I loved what I wrote, I didn't make any changes!

SPOTLIGHT: Well, did you feel like *Amazing Spider-Man #1* was going to fulfill the promise that was borne out of the response to *Amazing Fantasy #15*?

STAN: I hoped it would. But I felt that way about everything!

SPOTLIGHT: You did?

STAN: I felt that way about the *Fantastic Four*, the *X-Men*, the *Hulk*; everything I did, I liked it. And I liked the artist—mostly it was Kirby, and Ditko, then later on it was Romita, Buscema, all the guys. I liked what they did, I liked the way the pages looked when I got them back, and I always said, "Boy, this oughtta do well." The only one I wasn't sure of was *Sgt. Fury*, because that was a war book, and who the hell knew with a war book? But I liked it, and I figured we would take a chance.

SPOTLIGHT: Yeah, well, Marvel just put out the first volume of *Sgt. Fury Masterworks*, which includes the first 13 issues, and it's wonderful!

STAN: I loved it. You know what I liked the best about it? In the army, you talk dirty. All the soldiers talk dirty. I mean, if a four-letter word isn't in every sentence, then you're a Nazi spy, you're not a soldier. In writing *Sgt. Fury*, I think I managed to make those guys sound like they really were in the army, to make Fury sound like a tough sergeant, and I didn't use one dirty word! And I think that was one of my greatest achievements! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Nick Fury is one of your characters that has a very established way of speaking, a gutsy, crusty Brooklyn guy who doesn't mince words. Lots of writers have had to follow in your footsteps to put that across.

STAN: The funny thing is, I'm not crazy about war stories, so I don't remember how many issues we did, but at one point I said, "Let's drop the book." And we got so many letters from readers wanting it back! And I didn't want to do any new ones, so we did reprints—we re-did them, and they sold about as well as the original ones!

SPOTLIGHT: One of your big innovations was making the Marvel Method—in which you give the artists a basic plot or story idea and let them run with it over their allotted pages, after which you dialogue the story—the status quo at Marvel. What are some of your thoughts about this legacy?

STAN: There was a reason that the so-called "Marvel Style" of writing was so good. It wouldn't have been that good with artists who weren't that good, but I could make sure that I had the story I wanted, 'cause I gave the artist the story I wanted, but then the artist would do it in such an interesting and an unexpected way—very often, Jack, for example, would put in a scene that I hadn't told him about! And that made it even more interesting for me, 'cause it was like doing a crossword puzzle. I mean, "Gee, what is that—how does that fit into the…Oh, I see, well, I could make it seem very smooth for the transition by having him say this, and I'll put in a caption here, and I'll have the Human Torch kid the Thing about it, and then we'll segue into…" So it was fun, and it was mainly fun because the artist was so good and so creative themselves.

SPOTLIGHT: Marvel has reprinted your original proposal for Fantastic Four #1 in the first *Fantastic Four Omnibus*, and a lot of people consider the Marvel Method to be synonymous with the advent of the line of superhero comics, but did it predate the superhero comics, with the Western comics you were doing, like *Rawhide Kid*?

STAN: Honest to God, I don't remember I just don't remember I wrote a lot of scripts from page one to the end—you know, full script—and I might have done that with the Western strips. They were so easy, they took no time at all. All the stories were the same! *(Laughter.)* I had a different villain's name every month but then again, see, Jack Keller did a lot of *Kid Colts*, and I didn't talk to Jack much, so the chances are I wrote a complete script. I don't remember. I think with the monster stories that I did with Kirby, those crazy titles, I think there I would just say "Jack, get a guy who crawled out from under a rock and he's 20 feet tall and we'll call him Gazoom and we'll .." and then he did the rest of it, and I put in the dialogue But the Marvel Method I used exclusively after *Fantastic Four*, 'cause I had to, 'cause I was doing so many books, there was no way I could have sat down and done a complete script.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, the reason I ask that is because there were so many reasons why, particularly with the *Rawhide Kid*—which predated *Fantastic Four* by a good year and a half—it seemed that that one could see the gears turning a little bit on some of the puzzle pieces that would all come together with the superhero comics.

> **"BUT IN THOSE DAYS, IF THE COVER DIDN'T CATCH YOUR EYE YOU WOULDN'T BUY THE BOOK. AND HE WAS GREAT AT THAT."**

JUSTIN: You can trace certain developments back to the westerns and even monster comics. .

SPOTLIGHT: Like the similarity of Johnny Bart, the Rawhide Kid, and Peter Parker who would come a few years later.

STAN: You know, it's funny, I hardly remember the Rawhide Kid. Did I write those early ones?

SPOTLIGHT: Well, supposedly *(Laughter)*

STAN: Larry Lieber wrote a lot later on, didn't he? But that was later.

SPOTLIGHT: That was later.

JUSTIN: Kirby drew the initial stories.

SPOTLIGHT: And they're now reprinting them in Masterworks.

STAN: Good I really don't remember now what the Rawhide Kid's angle was It's funny, my publisher, Martin, he loved the word "Kid" I mean all I had to do was come up with a title with the word "Kid" in it, and —you know, we had the Rawhide Kid, the Texas Kid, Kid Colt ... I think we had a few others...He was big on the word "Kid".

See, I had to get all the titles okayed by Martin when I'd come up with a title.

SPOTLIGHT: Tell us a little bit about Martin and what he meant to you as a mentor?

STAN: Martin was not a dumb guy. He was a brilliant man, and he was good at what he did. The one thing he was great at, and taught me a lot about, was covers. See, in those days you sold the book according to the cover mostly. Because when we started there wasn't that brand loyalty, there weren't kids saying every month, "Oh man, I can't wait for the next *Amazing Spider-Man*." They bought 'em arbitrarily, they walked to a newsstand and bought whatever cover grabbed their eye .. so Martin used to teach me the best colors to put on the covers. Some colors stand out better than others ... and always to put the title in a splash, and make a title that was provocative, and ... he really taught me a lot. I became the best damned cover guy in the business, and it was because of Martin. And our books sold because of those covers!

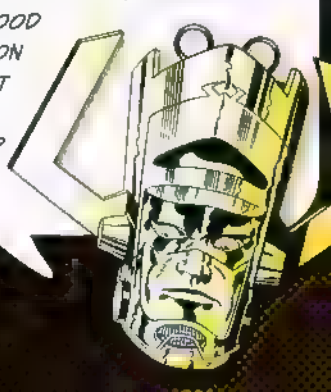
'Course, later on we could have had a blank cover - a kid would just say, "Has the latest Hulk come out?" But in those days, if the cover didn't catch your eye you wouldn't buy the book. And he was great at that.

SPOTLIGHT: You know, as far as representations of blacks in the '60s – there were none, until you guys came on and started to include them in the Marvel Universe. Gabe Jones, in the *Howling Commandos*, was the first black character to have prominence in a Marvel Comic.

STAN LEE SNUBS...

GALACTUS

LOOK, I KNOW I GOT THE CARDS STACKED AGAINST ME GETTING TO MEET STAN LEE. I'M 100 FEET TALL AND I EAT PLANETS THAT RIGHT THERE'LL INTIMIDATE ANYONE I'M NOT AN EASY GUY TO WANT TO GET TO KNOW, AND I'M AT PEACE WITH THAT BUT STAN'S CUTTIN' A RUG WITH OL' DOC DOOM, SO I GOTTA FIGURE MY CHANCES ARE GOOD IF STAN LEE MEETS IS A HIT AND THEY DO A SEQUEL (I'VE BEEN READIN' A LOTTA WAYNE DYER LATELY, AND I'M TRYING TO THINK POSITIVE, Y'SEE) I'VE HEARD STAN ONLY LIKES FUNNY STUFF THESE DAYS, SO ANYONE THAT'S GOT AN IN WITH HIM, TELL HIM I'VE BEEN WORKING ON A GOOD FAT BASTARD IMPRESSION "GET IN MAH BELLY! GET IN MAH BELLY!" SOUND JUST LIKE HIM, DON'T I?



READY FOR HIS CLOSE-UP: STAN IN THE

Sharp-eyed viewers might have noticed a familiar face in many recent Marvel movies. That's right, it's Smilin' Stan—and spotting his brief appearances has become something of a spectator sport for fans *Marvel Spotlight* brings you the following rundown on where to find Stan the Man in the Marvel Movies!

THE TRIAL OF THE INCREDIBLE HULK (1989)

In his very first Marvel cameo, Stan plays a juror at Bruce Banner – I mean, David Banner's trial Under pressure from the prosecuting attorney, Banner loses it, Hulks out and attacks the jury! The Hulk lifts the jury box and sending it crashing down . . but luckily for Stan, the whole scene was just a dream (For those not in the know, this made-for-TV movie co-stars Daredevil, the Man Without Fear, as Banner's attorney!)

X-MEN (2000)

Stan plays a hot dog vendor, horrified as the newly-mutated Senator Kelly crawls out of the water and onto the beach! Look for Stan around 43 minutes into the film.

SPIDER-MAN (2002)

At the World Unity Festival, Stan shows his heroic colors by pulling a little girl to safety from a reign of debris caused by the Green Goblin's attack. Check it out at just shy of 67 minutes in!

STAN REMINISCES: I was standing in the street sellin sunglasses, and (director) Sam Raimi had an idea which I loved. He said he wanted Peter Parker to walk by and I would say to him, "Hey, would you like a pair of sunglasses?", but Peter would just walk on by. So then I think I said to Sam, "How about if I say to Peter, 'Would you like a pair of these glasses, they're the kind the X-Men wore!'" And Sam said, "That sounds good."So I tried it, and they say, "Nah, no, Stan, I don't think we can use that", so we tried another thing.

I'm with this little girl– she's, I don't know, seven, six, five years old – and I'm showing her a pair of sunglasses. And the Goblin walks by and drops a bomb in Times Square. So Sam said, "When the bomb drops, everybody run", so I ran away. Cut! Now we do it a second time. But I said "Sam, it makes me very unheroic - there's a little girl, a bomb, and I'm running away! Shouldn't I.. ", and he said, "Maybe you're right, maybe you should lift her up." So we did it again.

The bomb dropped, I grabbed the girl, and I tried to lift her … and I tried to lift her … and I can't lift her! It's like she's cemented to the ground. I never realized how weak I was, or how fat she was. *(Laughter)* Sam said, "Cut!", said "Stan, if we keep doing it your way, this is gonna be a mini-series!" Thatwas the most brilliant remark! So we did it again Finally, instead of lifting her I think I took her hand and I started running with her, I don't know. Anyway, that's the whole – how it come out in the movie, I don't even remember which one they used.

DAREDEVIL (2003)

Stan's life is saved in this movie, as—playing a pedestrian preoccupied with reading his newspaper—he is stopped from walking into traffic by a swift whack of young Matt Murdock's cane! Look for this quick scene just under 13 minutes into the film.

STAN REMINISCES: I'm reading a newspaper, walking in the street, and I come to the curb and I stop, and I'm still holding the newspaper. And there's a bus which looked like it'll hit me if I take another step. And this little boy—Matt Murdock as a boy—is standing next to me with a cane. So we're standing next to each other, and he taps me with the cane to stop me, so I don't take a step and get hit by the bus. Well, after the first take I said to the kid, "You know, you gotta do it a little harder! I mean, you just touched my shirt, but that isn't gonna stop me. You gotta do it harder!" *(Laughter.)* So the kid taps me again, really lightly. I said, "No, no! You've gotta really hold me back, or else I feel stupid stopping, 'cause there's no reason to stop!" Well, we must have done that five or six times. I couldn't get that kid to just press the cane against me!

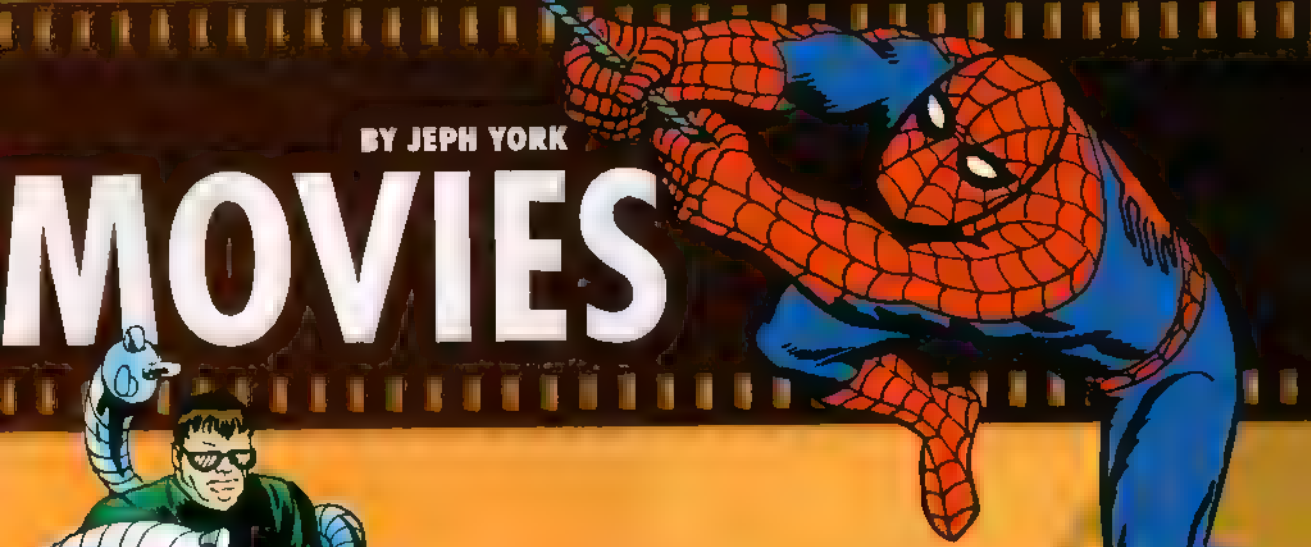
HULK (2003)

Stan's not the only special cameo in this film, as he and 70's Hulk star Lou Ferrigno play security guards! As they walk past, Stan grouses about the inadequate resources given to the lab security .. his very first speaking role in a Marvel film! This funny scene is found 12 minutes into the movie.

STAN REMINISCES: "Of course a fun thing that I did was with *Hulk*, when I walked out of a building as a security guard. It was funny, because I was ad-libbing a lot during that, and it had Ang Lee cracking up, he was laughing so hard…."

BY JEPH YORK

MOVIES



SPIDER-MAN 2 (2004)

Proving himself a hero in both Spider Man films, Stan pulls a woman to safety from another chunk of falling debris—this time, the result of a high-rise battle between Spidey and Doctor Octopus. Stan's sharp reflexes can be seen 50 minutes into the movie!

(*BONUS!* For those with *Spider-Man 2* on DVD, take a peek at the very end of the Blooper Reel. After the blooper credits, there's a clip of Stan's original role in the film. He was going to be the man who shouted "Hey, Spider-Man stole that guy's pizzas!"—but he flubs the line in hilarious fashion. Check it out!)

FANTASTIC FOUR (2005):

This film features Stan's biggest and best role to date—as he fills the shoes of the Baxter Building's loveable mailman, Willie Lumpkin!

STAN REMINISCES: When Reed Richards came back, I was supposed to say something like, "Welcome back to the Baxter Building" … and I hated 'back' and 'Baxter Building', but that's what they wrote for me. So I said that, and you know they take twenty takes. I said that on the first take Then I decided I wanted a little more screen time, so on the second take I said, "Welcome back to the Baxter Building, Dr. Richards, we missed you." Third time, "Welcome back to the Baxter Building, Dr. Richards, we missed you, you're looking well." *(Laughter.)*

By the fourth time, the fella playing REed got into the spirit of it, and after I said, "Welcome back to the Baxter Building, Dr. Richards! We missed you, you re looking well", he said "Good to see you, Willie!" Well, by the time we're in the seventh or eighth take, we had a long conversation going! We were ad-libbing The director was hysterical. He was laughing, everybody on the set was laughing and applauding … it cracked 'em up. Naturally, they used the first one.

But they said that it was one of the funniest bits they ever saw, and the guy playing Reed Richards, he was having fun too! It was a long speech! "How've you been, Willie, you're looking well, how's your family?…" *(Laughter.)*

AND, MINUTES LATER...
DO WE GO GET HIM, SIR? WHERE IS HE?
I HOPE IT'S A FEMALE! ONE JUST LIKE MARVEL GIRL! MMMM BOY!
SLOW DOWN, ICEMAN! THE PROFESSOR HASN'T SAID IT IS A "HE" YET!
INTO YOUR STREET CLOTHES-- ALL OF YOU! THERE IS WORK TO BE DONE!

X-MEN: THE LAST STAND (2006):

Stan plays a neighbor of young Jean Grey in the opening sequence of this film, out watering his lawn. When the young telekinetic displays her mutant powers, Stan is shocked to see the water from his hose begin flowing—up! (Stan's across-the-street neighbor—the man whose lawnmower begins floating away—is played by veteran X-scribe Chris Claremont.)

SPIDER-MAN 3 (2007):

Though this film has not yet been released, Stan's cameo is already in the can, and according to him, it's his best one yet! Stan says: "I can't tell you what it is, but it was the cleverest thing—this one, people are gonna talk about. It was Sam's idea, and he has me for a few seconds speaking to Peter Parker. And what I say is incredible and I can't tell you what it is, but it's the best. People are really gonna talk about it!"

Along with Spider Man 3, where will Stan show up next? With a *Ghost Rider* film heading for the big screen, sequels to *Fantastic Four* and *Hulk* being planned, and movies like *Iron Man* and *Thor* being readied for production, Stan-spotters have their work cut out for them!

STAN: Oh really? I don't know chronologically how it went – I know we had the Black Panther, and we had…

JUSTIN: In some early Spider-Mans, you'd see some black faces in the crowd scenes…

STAN: Not only that, I made the City Editor black. That was Robbie Robertson.

SPOTLIGHT: I first started noticing it that Gabe Jones was the first major character, with a speaking role. But I started noticing background characters in *Amazing Spider-Man*, during Ditko's run—policemen, passersby, non-speaking roles – that had to have been a big deal, right?

STAN: I didn't think so.

SPOTLIGHT: But nobody had done that before.

JUSTIN: Did you hear anything from Martin Goodman about that?

STAN: No.

SPOTLIGHT: So there were no issues at all?

JUSTIN: "…they won't sell down south, because we have ."

STAN: No, never, never. The only time I ever heard that was with *Sgt Fury*, when people said, "Geez, you got a Jewish guy, you got a black guy, you got a … you won't sell it in the south, you won't sell it in the west, you won't sell it in the…" I said, "Ah, let's do it anyway" Didn't affect the sales.

SPOTLIGHT: So there were no editorial discussions about ushering in this sort of new era of representation? I mean it had to have meant a lot for black people that were buying comics at the time.

STAN: No, no. Don't forget, I was totally in charge I mean, Martin had to okay everything, but mainly he was just interested in the covers, and whenever I said, "I wanna do it", we did it And it didn't seem like a big deal to anybody I said, "Hey, let's always make sure we get black guys in the crowd, and we get you know, different types of people Ugly people, short people, tall people, redheads, women" – and, fine. When the artists remembered it, they did it.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you feel like you could sometimes do things without Martin knowing? Maybe slip in some things—or did you feel like you didn't even need to do that?

STAN: I didn't need to. Whatever I wanted to put in, I could put in. Martin didn't care.

JUSTIN: As long as the books sold, he left you alone?

STAN: Yeah If the books didn't sell, he woulda cared *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: And of course, you did recently suggest that Percy Pinkerton, also one of the Howling Commandos, was -

STAN: *(Interrupts.)* Yeah, I didn't actually want to say he was gay, but I figured he was..

JUSTIN: Effeminate?

STAN:…a little less macho than the other guys. I just had fun with him, you know?

SPOTLIGHT: Well, obviously, and he provides a good counterpoint of masculinity to the other characters. Percy can handle an umbrella, that's for sure! *(Laughter.)* Stan, are there any Steve Ditko anecdotes you haven't told yet? Because he's a big mystery in Marvel history.

THE INCREDIBLE CHANGING HULK:

Stan and his creative partners had some trouble getting the Hulk out of the gate with a distinctive look or character. In the first panel from issue #1 *(below)*, the Hulk is gray! The next issue, his skin color turns to green *(top right)*. And in issue #4 *(bottom right)*, the Hulk turns from smart to dumb! Even back in those days, there were continuity concerns that could keep creators up at night!

I -- I SEEM TO REMEMBER NOW! IT WAS THE BOMB! THE GAMMA RAYS! THEY TURNED ME INTO -- THIS -- WHEN DARKNESS FELL!
IT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO ME IF YOU HADN'T SAVED ME! THAT'S WHY I'M STAYIN' WITH YOU!

STAN: Yeah, a big mystery to me!

SPOTLIGHT: Steve worked quite a bit on *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Dr. Strange* and certain other things; he did some *Incredible Hulk* and *Iron Man* stuff and was prolific during the Atlas Era monster comics reign. What was he like to work with? Was he just a real cool guy?

STAN: Couldn't have been greater. I loved him. He was the best guy to work with you could ever find. Talented, dependable … in an emergency he could do a thing, he'd bat it out fast and it was still good. If I needed him to pencil something for somebody else, or to quickly ink something somebody had pencilled 'cause the inker didn't show up … whatever it was, he was there! And he always did it beautifully, always on time, never complained … and at some point, years later, he got mad at me and he quit. And I said to him once, "What the hell did you quit for?" And he said, "You know!" And I don't know, and he never told me, and that was it.

SPOTLIGHT: Do you ever talk to him anymore?

STAN: I met him at the offices of Marvel a few years ago … or, maybe it was like ten years ago now … in New York. And he was very friendly, we talked for a while, we even talked about maybe doing a strip together.

JUSTIN: I think you were thinking of having him as the artist for *Ravage 2099*, right

STAN: I don't know. I don't know whether this was before or after that. I don't remember what we discussed, but the one thing he said he would never do was *Dr. Strange* or *Spider-Man*.

SPOTLIGHT: You know, for a guy who's achieved so much as a comics writer and publisher, you never went to college

STAN: No. I went to City College of New York at night for six months. I went there because there was a girl I met that I liked, and—I can't remember, I think I worked in the daytime and the only way I could see her was at night, but she was going to college at night, so I figured, "Screw it, I'll go to college!" So I went there at night, and we were able to get together, 'cause she was in college, but then we broke up, so after the six months I quit City College.

SPOTLIGHT: Do you ever feel any regret about not having gotten your higher education at university?

STAN: Oh, I wish I had gone. There are so many things I don't know, so many things about literature, art – there are writers I've never read and so forth. And yeah, I wish I had been able to go to college. I always hoped I would, but then World War II broke out.

SPOTLIGHT: Would you have studied literature?

STAN: Oh, sure. Sure. Believe it or not, I might have wanted to also study science. I am an idiot when it comes to science, but I'm fascinated by it. I mean, I always feel guilty, even when people interview me, I feel you should be interviewing guys who are doing medical research, who are building bridges, who are—I mean, those are the people that really are doing things that count, you know? I think I'd have loved to have been a researcher. I'd loved to have worked in a laboratory, and looked for a cure for cancer. I feel those things can't be that hard to do if you just know what you're doing. But I always felt, as a matter of fact, I could solve the secret of the world. You know, everybody wonders what's it all about, where did we come from, why are we here, who is God and all of that. I always felt if I could get on top of a mountain, quietly, for two weeks, with no phone calls and nobody bothering me, I could figure it all out. But I never had the two weeks…

JUSTIN: You've always seemed to have the "can-do" personality, a confidence that says, "I can handle this."

STAN: Yeah, things can be handled, more or less…

JUSTIN: "Anything you throw at me, I'll give my best, and - "

STAN: *(Interrupts.)* Except in two areas. I cannot sing, and it kills me. My wife is the greatest singer in the world—I can't carry a tune! When I was a kid in school, they had something called the Listeners' Room, where if you couldn't carry a tune you had to sit in the Listeners' Room. I was there for my whole school career. As a kid, if I'd open my mouth once, I'd throw the whole class off-key. It was embarrassing. And I can't play a musical instrument. I can pick out a tune on a piano with one finger, but I can't play a musical instrument.

JUSTIN: Didn't you used to have the acarina? You used to irritate the Timely Office…

STAN: *(Excited. Leaps up and leans across table.)* I had an acarina, yes!

JUSTIN: And you used to irritate Simon and Kirby with it!

STAN: Yes! Yes! They hated it!

JUSTIN: "Who is this kid playing the acarina?"

STAN: Everybody hated my playing! And I don't blame them. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Did you have any particular tunes you packed out on that?

STAN: Yeah, I could play anything - badly!!! *(Laughter.)* It's funny, though.

CONTINUED ON THIRD PAGE FOLLOWING

STAN LEE SNUBS…

DIABLO

IT IS TOO BAD MR STAN LEE DID NOT WANT TO MEET ME, HIS MOST INFAMOUS VILLAIN, DIABLO, FOR I HAVE JUST BOUGHT A VILLA ON THE MEDITERRANEAN, IN IBIZA, WHERE WE COULD HAVE DINED ON GRILLED SEA DATILS, DRANK WINE FROM MY IMPRESSIVE CELLAR AND WATCHED THE SUN SET AS WE SHARED MANY MEMORIES AND FANTASTIC TALES IBIZA HAS SUCH A BEAUTIFUL SUNSET/ AND WITH BEAUTIFUL SUNSETS, THERE MUST ALSO COME THE BEAUTIFUL PARTY GIRLS AH, WHAT LOVELY PARTY GIRLS, FROM ALL OVER EUROPE, READY TO DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY/ THEY CALL ME 'FUNKY D' AS THEY PLAYFULLY TOUSLE MY ORNAMENTAL COWL MR STAN LEE COULD HAVE MET THEM TOO FOR I AM NOT A JEALOUS MAN – I WOULD HAVE INTRODUCED HIM/ BUT IN CHOOSING TO SNUB ME, MR STAN LEE WILL LIVE FOREVER WITH A REGRET HE CANNOT EVER KNOW

STAN LEE

No, we didn't pull Stan aside to talk Stripperella (though we tried to get a live interview with Pamela Anderson on the subject!) When we say "Stan Lee Strips", we're talking about the Spider-Man newspaper strips that premiered in newspapers all over the country back in 1977. The daily panels that Stan did in collaboration with artist John Romita certainly helped while away the time while I scarfed down my complete breakfast, and now Marvel is prepping for release a complete accounting of all those classic Spider-Man strips, to be released in two volumes in 2007. We broke the news to Stan about the reprinting of those strips, talked about the challenges of keeping continuity with the comic book, and had a nice little tangent about the controversy concerning the marriage of Peter Parker and Mary Jane. Read on, True Believer!

SPOTLIGHT: Marvel is preparing a big comprehensive collection of your collaboration with John Romita on the Spider-Man newspaper strip.

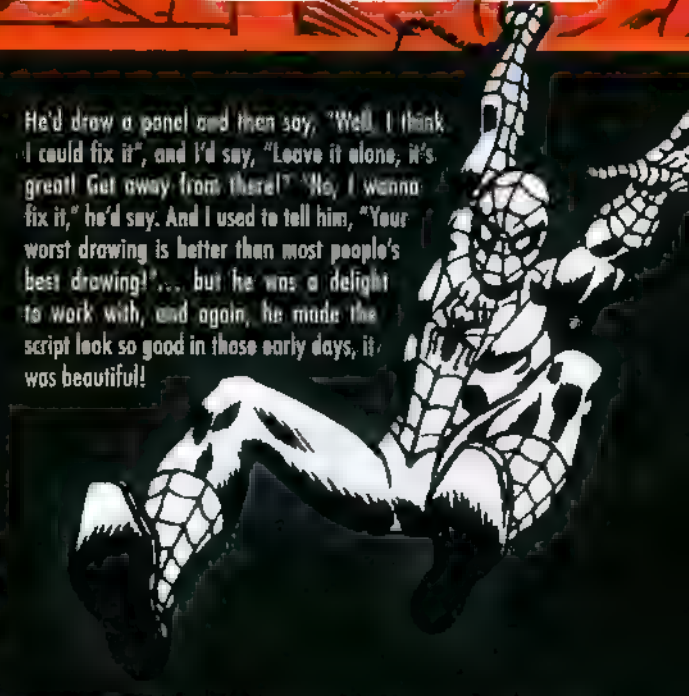
STAN: Wow.

SPOTLIGHT: It's going to be a two-volume set that Marvel will deliver in 2007. What do you think about that? That's pretty cool, huh?

STAN: I'm thrilled. That's great.

SPOTLIGHT: Hopefully you'll be hearing soon about writing an introduction for it! Looking back, you were returning to Spider-Man after six years away from writing your last regular issue of the comic book. Was it hard getting back into the swing of things after that period of time?

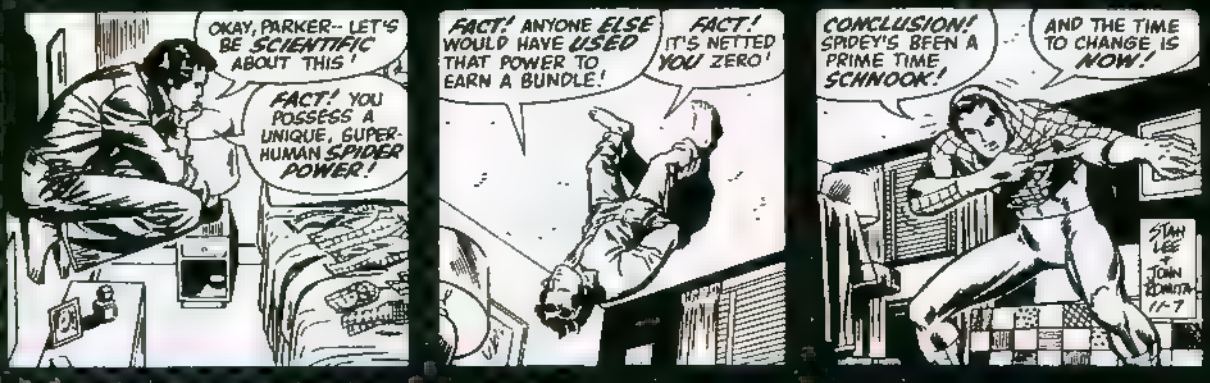
STAN: Oh no. Especially working with John. He is so good. I mean, he is right up there with Kirby, as far as being easy to work with, dependable, never a bad job! I mean, there was never anything I could correct, you know? If only he would work faster. He's fast enough, but he was so good I wish he had been twice as fast, so we coulda used twice as much of his artwork—but he was one of those perfectionists. He'd draw a panel and then say, "Well, I think I could fix it", and I'd say, "Leave it alone, it's great! Get away from there!" "No, I wanna fix it," he'd say. And I used to tell him, "Your worst drawing is better than most people's best drawing!"... but he was a delight to work with, and again, he made the script look so good in those early days, it was beautiful!



SPOTLIGHT: Did you feel in your mind that it was a whole separate thing from the comic book continuity?

STAN: It was, yeah. It was the only way to do it, really, because we couldn't tie it in with the continuity, 'cause they were doing a book a month and we were doing three panels a day—it didn't work! And also I remember when Spider-Man got married, I wanted him married in the strip at the same time as he was married in the book. It was logistically one of the toughest things we ever arranged. Did it, somehow!

SPOTLIGHT: The marriage of Peter Parker and Mary Jane was an event the origins of which were in your strip. What do you think about the marriage between Peter and Mary Jane? What did you think about it then, when it happened, and what do you think about it now? I don't know if you're aware, but there is currently a big hubbub about perhaps splitting them up.


OKAY, PARKER-- LET'S BE SCIENTIFIC ABOUT THIS!
FACT! YOU POSSESS A UNIQUE, SUPER-HUMAN SPIDER POWER!
FACT! ANYONE ELSE WOULD HAVE USED THAT POWER TO EARN A BUNDLE!
FACT! IT'S NETTED YOU ZERO!
CONCLUSION! SPIDEY'S BEEN A PRIME TIME SCHNOOK!
AND THE TIME TO CHANGE IS NOW!
STAN LEE + JOHN ROMITA 11-7

STRIPS!

THERE MUST BE A ZILLION WAYS A GUY WITH SPIDER POWER CAN CASH IN ON IT!
STAN LEE JOHN ROMITA 11-8
AND I'VE GOTTA COME UP WITH ONE!
THWIPP!
SO START THINKING, WEB-SWINGER!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER!

STAN: I think the marriage was great. I think it needed that after all those years...

SPOTLIGHT: You don't think it made Spider-Man too grown-up, or do you think that it was time to do it eventually?

STAN: Well, you could be right. Maybe I should have always kept Spider-Man a teenager. In the Peanuts strip, little Charlie Brown never grew up. But maybe I was too influenced by fan mail, but I would get so much mail. "Spider-Man and Mary Jane have been dating for a million years, and when the hell are they gonna marry—and how long is he gonna be in college?" and all of that. And I began to think, "Well, maybe they're right. Maybe if you keep something exactly the same, year after year, the fans will get tired of it. Maybe you need a new jolt every so often." So I remember that there was one point, I took him out of high school and I put him in college. Then I had him get married. Now a million years later, they may be thinking of getting a divorce . . . I think probably that's the way to do it, because eventually you run out of...

SPOTLIGHT: Well, the characters lasted regardless, so perhaps it was a good idea.

STAN: Yeah. And don't forget, you're doing twelve books a month. That's like a little movie every month, and if it's the same—I know they're not the same, each story is different—but still, it's the same relationships month after month. Arthur Conan Doyle was able to get away with it with Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, but he was only doing, like, a book a year, and he only did a handful of books. I think that's what happened to Superman. You know, there was a time when nobody was buying Superman comics. It was just the same thing over time. So I think they're handling it right, now.

SPOTLIGHT: I'm curious about your feeling of ownership or entitlement over the characters you helped create. Not literal ownership, but just sort of emotional ownership, like perhaps when you see storylines that happen to your characters, do you sometimes feel like cringing, maybe feel a little resentment if it's not a choice to your liking?

"Spider-Man and Mary Jane have been dating for a million years, and when the hell are they gonna marry...?"

STAN: I don't have a chance to feel that way, 'cause in all honesty I don't have time to read the books. And again, to be honest, most of the time when I would read the books, if I saw a change, my usual reaction was, "Boy, that's pretty clever, I wish I had thought of that." I've got a lot of admiration for the Marvel editors and writers, and I think they're doing a great job. And the more fact that they're keeping the level of the books up, and we're selling the books in a time when it's so hard to sell comics . . . this thing they're doing now, with the Civil War, I think it's absolutely brilliant, and—wow. I mean, that's the type of thing I would love to have taken credit for. It's staggeringly brilliant, I think. It's making them more than just comics; I think it's now becoming literature! I love it.

SMILIN' STAN AND DAZZLIN' DAVID: Stan Lee and Marvel's Vice President of Sales David Gabriel pal around at the Marvel booth during the 2006 San Diego Comic-Con.

SPOTLIGHT: Now you brought up your wife, Joanie—and according to your biography, she's the one we can blame for the Marvel Age of comics. Because according to you, she encouraged you to have a go-for broke attitude with this opportunity that Martin presented to you, when he wanted you to craft a superhero book to respond to what DC was doing in the early sixties. And at that time, you were unsure if you even wanted to keep doing comics! And she emboldened you with the thought, "Just go in there, do what you want, and if it doesn't work, you tried and move on to something else. But if it does work, you've succeeded and can do comics your way!"

We know that you succeeded, beyond your wildest imaginations, but did you have anything specific in mind, if you had failed with that? Did you know specifically any kinds of opportunities you wanted to follow if you did leave comics at that moment?

STAN: No, I really didn't. I just knew there's gotta be something better than writing stories the way Martin wanted me to write them, 'cause I felt I'd been doing that for, I don't know, fifteen, twenty years, whatever it was, and I'm not getting anywhere! And again, when I tell you that people didn't respect comics, I used to say to Joanie, "You know, if I leave, where the hell will I go? It's not gonna be easy. I can't walk into Simon & Schuster and say, 'Gimme a job as an editor, I used to do comic book.' They'd kick me the hell out!" I would have to sit down, and finally have to try to write a book, or a play or movie or something, which I had never done, but I was so dissatisfied with what I had been doing that I felt I would be willing to take that chance. It's probably lucky that I didn't have to.

SPOTLIGHT: You could have gotten into real estate, used cars…

STAN: Oh, I love real estate, and I love cars! I always said I'd love to have been a used car salesman.

JUSTIN: Advertising, too…

STAN: Advertising I love. When I read a magazine, you know, a slick magazine, I look at the ads before anything. If I read *Newsweek*, which I love, the ads are what I read first.

SPOTLIGHT: You would have been great in advertising—obviously the stuff you learned about the comic covers completely correlates to advertising.

STAN: Well, I treated all of Marvel as a big ad campaign—with the slogans, "Make Mine Marvel", "Excelsior", "Hang Loose, Face Front", "'Nuff Said", little catchwords, "Welcome to the Marvel Age of Comics", all that sort of thing. I didn't think it out like a campaign, but it all was part of a big ad thing to give the company the right image, and to reach the reader and have the reader feel a little excitement. It was the same with the club, the M.M.M.S. I loved that; Martin made me stop that after a while, 'cause he told me we were spending too much time on it. We should have kept it. Anyway…

JUSTIN: That kind of approach was important after the '50s witch hunts kinda scared people away from comics. You pulled back some people.

STAN: Yeah. Tried to.

JUSTIN: Because you were saying, "Okay, it's a kid-friendly universe, your kids can come. It's fun!"

STAN: You guys know more about the things I've done than I do. I oughtta be interviewing you!

We'd love to take you up on that, Stan, but interviewing us would be nowhere near as fun, exciting, interesting and informative as interviewing you! We'd like to thank Stan for taking the time to meet with Marvel Spotlight *and engage in a little reverie about the subject we all love. Marvel Comics!*

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

JACK KIRBY • Official Handbook

REAL NAME: Jacob Kurtzberg
NICKNAME: "The King"
DATE OF BIRTH: August 28, 1917
PLACE OF BIRTH: New York City, NY
OCCUPATION: Comic book writer, entertainment producer
WEBSITE: www.jackkirby.com and www.kirbymuseum.com
FIRST MARVEL COMICS APPEARANCE: *Red Raven #1* (1940)

HISTORY: Jacob Kurtzberg was born in 1917 into a gritty upbringing in the streets of New York's Lower East Side. It would be many years before he would adopt the more familiar name of Jack Kirby, but his experiences on the street would help inform the work that later made him a legend. Unlike many of his rough-and-tumble peers, his imagination inspired him to look beyond the commonality of everyday life. He was inclined at an early age to pursue drawing, and he was also a guy who wanted to "get things done." This hard work ethic and ambition took him places most men of humble stations like his would never dream of going.

After some early strip work helped get his name out to prospective employers, a fateful meeting with artist Joe Simon connected the two of the hip and vaulted both of them into comics prominence. Together, they developed *Captain America Comics* for *Timely Comics*, and Jack immediately helped redefine what comics could be with his innovative page designs and proportion-exploding panels.

Soon, Simon & Kirby were working with National Publications, turning out hit kid gang comics like *Newsboy Legion* and *Boy Commandos*, as well as superhero fare like Sandman and Manhunter. Like many of his peers, he served honorably in WWII, with combat duties that took him through the European theater.

Through the 50s, Jack returned to comics, helping Joe Simon establish the romance genre with its first title, *Young Romance Comics*. More genre work followed for Timely/Atlas, with prolific output that covered western, war, and monster genres. When it came time to launch the Marvel Age of Comics, Stan Lee brought along Jack Kirby to help create the visual demeanor of this new universe of characters and stories. Jack brought his dynamic layouts, unparalleled bombast and unbridled creativity to the fore in books like *Fantastic Four*, *Avengers*, *X-Men*, *Incredible Hulk* and *Thor*, leaving his unmistakable stamp on the characters he created. He also returned to Captain America in the pages of *Tales of Suspense*, reviving from fictional suspended animation the character he had created almost twenty-five years previously.

The King, as a dominant force in popular culture, was the equal partner of Stan Lee in editorial decisions throughout the 1960s, before the artists were entrusted with taking the reins of their own work. Jack assimilated onto books by drawing over Jack's layouts. The Silver Age of Marvel Comics directly reflects the attitudes and values of Jack's artistic mind. After co-creating dozens and dozens of characters, drawing several hundred issues of *Fantastic Four* and completing a long tenure on *Thor*, Jack's time at Marvel drew too close in 1970. He moved to California and signed a contract with DC, this time handling the scripting chores as well as the art duties. Jack's "Fourth World" books (*New Gods*, *Forever People*, *Mister Miracle* and *Jimmy Olsen*), along with *Kamandi*, *OMAC* and *The Demon* were Jack's major efforts from that era. He was finally able to put everything together the way he saw it in his mind with this newfound artistic freedom, but it wasn't to last. His relationship with DC only lasted five years, and Jack returned to Marvel in 1975.

Back at the company he helped build, Jack created more new characters, *The Eternals*, *Machine Man*, and *Devil Dinosaur*. As well, he returned to the pages of *Captain America*, starting a long run that would last nearly two years, and he also started up the first series for another character he had created back in 1966, Black Panther. He once again left Marvel Comics, pursuing new challenges in the field of television animation, drawing storyboards for hit shows like *Thundarr the Barbarian*. He still had comics in him, however, and he forty years after his career had begun, he turned to the indie publishers at Pacific Comics to release his *Captain Victory and His Galactic Rangers* and *Silver Star* series.

Jack continued creating comics throughout the '80s and early '90s until passing away in 1994, a creative giant for whom the word "legend" may be too small a title.

THE MARVEL COMICS LIBRARY:
SILVER AGE HEROES (1961-1970, 1975-1978):

2001: A Space Odyssey #1-10
2001: A Space Odyssey Treasury Special
Amazing Spider-Man #8
Ant-Man/Giant-Man from Tales to Astonish #27, 35-40, 44, 49-51
Avengers #1-8, 14-16
Black Panther #1-12
Captain America from Tales of Suspense #59–75, 77-86, 92-99
Captain America #100-109, 112, 193-214, Annual #3-4
Captain America Bicentennial Battles Treasury Special
Daredevil #12-13
Devil Dinosaur #1-9
Eternals #1-19, Annual #1
Fantastic Four #1-102, 108, Annual #1-6
Human Torch from Strange Tales #101-105, 114, 120, Annual #2
Incredible Hulk #1-5
Incredible Hulk from Tales to Astonish #68-84
Inhumans in Amazing Adventures #1-4
Ka-Zar from Astonishing Tales #1-2
Iron Man from Tales of Suspense #40-41, 43
Machine Man #1-9
Nick Fury from Strange Tales #135-153
Not Brand Echh #1, 3, 5-7
Sgt. Fury #1-7, 13
Silver Surfer #18, Graphic Novel
Sub-Mariner from Tales to Astonish #82-83
Thor from Journey Into Mystery 83-89, 93, 97-125, Annual #1
Thor #126-177, 179, Special #2
X-Men #1-17

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

THE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW WITH LISA KIRBY, STEVE ROBERTSON AND MIKE THIBODEAUX

Creators of Jack Kirby's Galactic Bounty Hunters

[illegible] Kirby, [illegible] homecoming. She had previously attended the convention only on extremely rare occasions, despite it being the "Convention That Jack Built". Perhaps intimidated by the world full of admirers that traveled to San Diego like they were pilgrims heading to Mecca, Lisa never made the tradition of visiting the con like her parents did.

But all that has changed now that Lisa has had an awakening concerning her father and his role as a groundbreaking artist of unparalleled ideas. She had always known her dad as a source of fatherly comfort and wisdom, but recently upon helping inventory his vast cache of art, she found herself soul-to-soul with Jack the artist. She discovered some characters created by her dad and then set aside for later use, only to be lost to the passage of time. This discovery blossomed into a unique project that Lisa has undertaken in collaboration with Genesis West veterans Mike Thibodeaux, Steve Robertson and Richard French, themselves acolytes of "The Kirby Way." The project is called *Jack Kirby's Galactic Bounty Hunters*, and though its inspiration is the small handful of characters and drawings that Jack left behind, it winds up being so much more.

MEET YOUR GALACTIC BOUNTY HUNTERS: Four heroes designed by The King, including Skylla, Tyr, Garm and Mainframe, plus the genuinely awful villainess Ma Slugg! (From *GBH* #1.)

2006

Lee was game to discuss the project that bears her dad's name. Also along [illegible] who have plenty of keen insights into the man they knew as both legend and friend.

SPOTLIGHT: Your dad was like the Bob Dylan of comic art. He was ahead and left behind so many innovations in his artform that were uniquely his own, especially during the '70s. Quite frankly, he exploded the art form. Did you have any clue about that when you were a little girl?

LISA: No. *(Laughter.)* I'll be honest - I had no idea. That was my dad and that was his job, and that's what he did for a living. Thinking back on it now, my childhood was probably a little bit different than other kids, but at the time I didn't think anything of it. You know, I'd go into the studio and see what he was doing, and he'd explain things to me, what was happening on the drawing board, and I'd say, "Okay!" and then go out and play. But that was about it. I mean there were people coming in and out of the house a lot, other artists, a constant group of people who were there all the time. That was just part of life and I didn't think anything of it. He was just my dad.

SPOTLIGHT: Your parent's concern about your asthma was the main reason your family picked up from New York and moved out to California, right?

LISA: Well, yeah, partly! I guess I have to take some of the blame on that! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: How old were you when you made the move?

LISA: Probably about 8, if I remember that for sure! My mom and I both had really bad asthma, and my mom was pretty ill, and the winters were hard in New York. And you know, they say you need to go to a hot, dry climate. I was actually a pretty sickly kid, so they just thought that would be best.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you remember the time in New York when you were growing up? Did you remember what it was like in the Kirby household?

LISA: Oh gosh, a little bit. Not that much. I remember living in Long Island in the house. I do remember my dad's studio. I remember going down to his studio, which was in the basement, and everyone always called it the dungeon, because it was a tiny little room, no windows, filled with books, dark and dingy and he had his TV and his radio - which he always had turned on! So it was like going down to the dungeon.

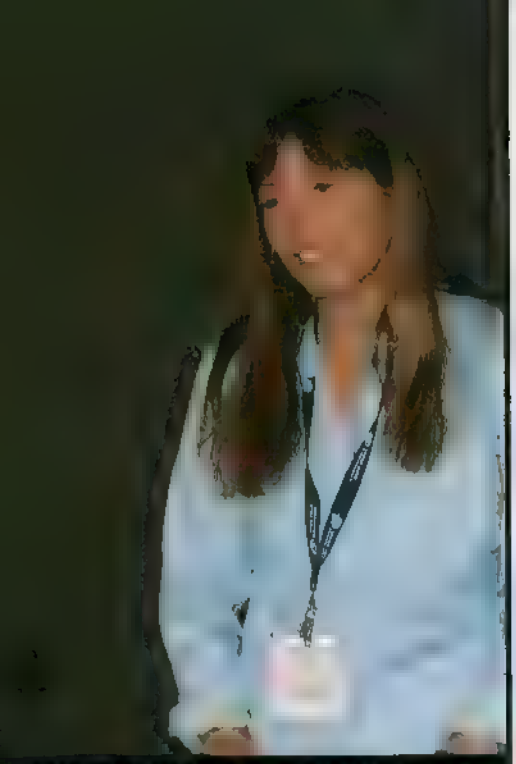
SPOTLIGHT: And his cigars?

LISA: Oh, I always remember the cigars. He was restricted to just smoking the cigars in the studio, so when you walked in, there were fumes.

MIKE: Restricted by who? Your mom?

LISA: *(Laughter.)* Yeah! Well, you know, she had asthma, and nobody liked the smoke. His walls were yellow from the smoke. Nobody denied him his cigars... every time you saw him he had a cigar, birthdays he got cigars and every holiday. That's what we bought him.

SKYLLA UNLEASHED! The sexy feline Skylla from the cover to GBH #2, rendered with pure Kirby bombast!



LISA KIRBY AT THE CON: Her mom and dad sure would be proud to see her taking part in the Kirby Museum panel at the 2006 San Diego Con, along with John Morrow of the *Jack Kirby Collector*.

Never before published original sketch by Jack Kirby of daughter Lisa as a little girl. Image courtesy of Lisa Kirby.

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible] you [illegible] memories or times you were down in the basement and you saw him laboring over an issue of, like, the *Fantastic Four*?

LISA: I wish I could say I did! But I don't remember any specific job he was doing. I remember watching him draw but I can't tell you an what day I saw him draw a particular character or story.

SPOTLIGHT: In a previous interview with Spotlight that we did with Steve McIlvain, he said that his little girl is now at the age where she's starting to figure out that other kid's parents don't sit around in their underwear all day drawing comic books. Did anyone explain to you that what your dad did was something really cool or unique?

LISA: I don't know if it was actually explained, it's just how things were.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you ever go over to other people's houses and say, "Wait a minute... my family might be weird!"

LISA: No, I remember my friends coming over, and I was really shy [illegible] so what was kinda cool about my dad is what he did for a living actually kinda opened doors for me to have him go to my classrooms and draw for the kids and there's 45 year old adults now with sketches probably. I don't know if they still have them! *(Laughter.)* Being the way I was, it really opened doors for me, so in that way I said, "Oh, he does do something special, everybody seems to be drawn to it." And then I'd have friends come over as a teenager and they'd disappear into the studio for hours and they'd come back out and I'd say, "I thought you were here to see me!" And they'd say, "So what's up with your dad?"

SPOTLIGHT: Did you have any feelings of resentment about that?

LISA: No, not at all! It was kinda funny... I used to think maybe he wasn't doing such a cool thing, but then it wasn't till adulthood – and Mike will probably vouch for this – but I'm like, "Wow, look at this artwork!" After living immersed in it all your life, you don't think about it, but later on in life, I was like, "Oh my gosh, look at this!"

SPOTLIGHT: When reading his late '70s comics as a kid, I was inspired by his letters pages where he would write essays about his story concepts and ideas, and I used to dream about what it would be like to sit at the feet of Jack Kirby, in his home studio with all his art right there, and just talk about Machine Man, the Fantastic Four, the Eternals. You got to live that every day, but being so close to it, it sounds like it didn't really sink into you in the same manner at all.

LISA: No, not really. Like you said, I thought of him as my father. I didn't think of him a famous cartoonist or artist. As you get older of course, you realize your father has a little bit different occupation than some others. It wasn't until, like I said, later on in life when I really looked at the artwork.

SPOTLIGHT: I have stories of fans just coming over to your home in Thousand Oaks, and Jack and Roz would always greet them and be nice to them, give them muffins and iced tea.

LISA: They were always feeding people! Yeah, you know, it was just part of my life so I didn't think of it as strange or weird; it was just how things were. My parents basically had an open door policy. I mean you could just show up, and it'd be like, "Oh yeah, come on in, and we'll put out some cookies and ice cream and milk", and my mom would make sandwiches or whatever. And we'd have pool parties, and people would come over and their kids would swim, so it was just kinda like that. And it was nice, they were just nice, humble people.

Sometimes the people who came over were a little annoying. There was a few fans I knew had to roll my eyes at...

FANTASTIC FOUR:

The Lee/Kirby Lost Issue

Marvel Comics finds itself in a unique position to bring its hardcore fans something they could have scarcely imagined would be possible: a new Stan Lee/Jack Kirby issue of *Fantastic Four!* It's as if Beatles fans were being presented the opportunity to hear a newly discovered Lennon/McCartney recording, or pop culture archivists had just uncovered a long-lost film of an Abbott & Costello comedy routine. When Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were united, they were the jet fuel that propelled the Marvel Age of Comics headlong into comics history, and it excites all the comic-book geeky nerve endings to know that we'll finally see the fruits of one of their final collaborations formally laid out for perpetuity — on the flagship title, no less!

The seed of this idea started growing when editor Tom Brevoort was consulting on the preparation of *Fantastic Four Masterworks Vol. 10*, the hardcover volume that reprinted *FF #94-104* — the issues that wrapped up Lee and Kirby's illustrious run. "Because it was the last volume, Masterworks editor Cory Sedlmeier wanted to fat-pack it with as many extras and cool things as he could," says Tom. "I suggested that maybe we should try and reprint the article that John Morrow wrote for the *Jack Kirby Collector* about Lee/Kirby's 103rd issue — the one that was supposed to be the 102nd issue, but never got finished and was chopped up and used as flashbacks in issue #108."

Cory and Tom got on the move. They gathered the materials and made all the necessary arrangements to include the penciled pages - warts and all - along with Morrow's article , as bonus material in the Masterworks. Having assembled all the pieces together, somebody had a bright idea: let's finish this story once and for all! "Since we had all the pieces together - more or less - we made arrangements with the Kirby family, made arrangements with Stan, and so now we're doing it!" said Tom.

FF #102, page 21 ART from the original pencil art to what was to have been FF #102 by Jack Kirby before fate intervened. Lost for 37 years, these historic pages will finally see the light of day.

Of course, anybody who's seen the pages in the back of *FF Masterworks Vol. 10* knows the "less" part of "more or less" – some of the pages have blank panels where some of that fine Jack Kirby art should be. About that mystery, Tom explains, "There are about eight to nine panels that are completely missing from the job, once you piece it all back together. The physical boards were actually cut up when these were used as a flashback in FF #108, so the pencils for the unused portion – most of them were found and recovered – but there are still a handful of panels that do not exist. They haven't been found. They were drawn, and at this late stage, barring a total fluke of luck, it is unlikely that they will be found - certainly not in time for this project."

But that's a minor impediment to a project that has "labor of love" written all over it. Fans will be overjoyed to be able to soak in a story in an approximation of how it was originally intended. To do that, though, means calling upon new talent to finish the job. With that in mind, Tom tells *Spotlight* readers that that is still a part of the job that is undergoing. "I don't want to mention any names because we haven't finalized any of it yet. I've got communications out to one or two people, but until somebody says , "Yes, I would like to do that", it would be preemptive to discuss it right now.

As for the book itself, it's tentatively slated to appear in April of 2007, and it will include not only the Lost FF story, but a host of other features. At this stage of development, Tom sees the one-shot stretching out to about 80 pages and including a bunch of extra content that will make this the complete package that will leave FF fans feeling satisfied, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby fans feeling satisfied. "For the main story, what we're talking about doing is rebuilding the story with Stan, and having Joe Sinnott ink the remaining pages, and get it all nicely lettered and colored," says Tom. "We're going to again reprint the John Morrow article with the original Kirby pencils, so people can see that if they haven't already read it in *Jack Kirby Collector* or in *FF Masterworks Vol. 10*. We're also going to reprint *Fantastic Four #108* with the pages used as flashback material, and assuming that we can find copies of all or most of the pencils to the pages that Sinnott inked in 1970, we'll actually also have another version of the story that will be inked and colored and possibly even scripted by modern guys. Who these modern guys will be is still up in the air. In one interview before, I said somebody like Danny Miki or somebody like Richard Isanove, but we haven't actually spoken to them, and they haven't actually come on board, so it's not necessarily going to be them, but definitely people like them."

Folks familiar with the sometimes rancorous relationship between Marvel Comics and the Kirby family may wonder how a project like this is even possible. For their part, according to Tom the Kirby family "seem to be very excited and enthusiastic about it." And that makes a Marvel employee and longtime comics fan like Tom Brevoort very pleased. "It's definitely a step in the right direction. Between this and Lisa Kirby's *Galactic Bounty Hunters* project on Icon, it's definitely a bridge that's being built here, and a lot of kudos need to go out to Marvel Publisher Dan Buckley for that. He's the guy who is most instrumental in making that happen and putting it all together."

Once the final project is put together, and the pieces of *Fantastic Four #103* have been assembled, how will fans feel about it? Yes, this is Lee/Kirby we're talking about here, and their names put together implies a standard of excellence and excitement that few other names in comics can elicit when combined. Tom has some interesting observations about this phenomenon: "The people that will like this will like it. I mean, it's the last Silver Age Stan and Jack story. Not to be a pessimist, but this was a self-contained issue at the end of their run. It's NOT the *Galactus Trilogy*. It's never going to be and it wouldn't have been in 1970, but it is very much a Stan and Jack Fantastic Four story from the very end of their big, classic run, so it's kind of like finding a little hidden treasure. When *FF #108* came out back in the day, even then it was a strange issue of the *FF*."

And not to let an opportunity pass by to educate readers on the finer points of Marvel history, Tom Brevoort shares his thoughts on the original publication of some of these panels in the out-of-context *FF #108*. "I've heard it speculated that the reason Marvel picked that issue to drop these flashbacks in was that was the same month Jack's first issue of *Jimmy Olsen* – his first work with rival DC Comics – was set to appear on stands. I guess it's not impossible that that's the case, but having studied it, and having talked with John Romita and guys like that, I don't think that's the case. I think it's much more a case of Marvel realizing they had this job – it was sitting on a shelf, they paid for the job - so they wanted to get some use out of it. I don't think it was a deliberate attempt to counter-program *Jimmy Olsen*. I don't think anybody at Marvel has ever uttered the phrase, "We must counter-program *Jimmy Olsen*!"

MORE ART FROM THE LEE/KIRBY LOST FF ISSUE!

his comics.

SPOTLIGHT: The word "genius" gets thrown around a lot these days in popular culture. Not about every musician, actor, or artist but people willing to say there are geniuses at some point, but the term genius is meant to only apply to a very select group of people who were really exceptional beyond even really high standards of excellence and achievement. Do you think Jack Kirby was a genius? Or do you think perhaps his contributions were simply an element of hard work and some creativity, not of the spark of genius?

STEVE: I think there was definitely an element of genius in him. It's hard for me to describe, those things that came out of his head that he was able to communicate to other people. He was never formally trained, he wasn't a big photo-reference guy, and you could tell when he was drawing, everything was just coming out of his head. He would get an impression of life, but really it was entirely his own universe when he was drawing.

HULK VS. THOR: Nobody could make this fan-favorite battle more epic, more action-packed, more senses-shattering than Jack! Ol' Jude Jaws versus the hammer-swingin' Avengers, courtesy of the King! (The cover to *Journey Into Mystery #112.*)

think that's why he's really head and shoulders above other artists. Like Mike was saying, there are other artists that have plenty to be proud of in their artwork, but they couldn't even come close to accomplishing all that Jack has done—and we're talking in the '40s, the '50s, the '60s, the '70s—you know? That's genius.

SPOTLIGHT: How about you, Mike?

MIKE: Genius? Yeah, I think there are some people who come into the world, and they're born to make a really big change. He was a movement, you know? All the way through the years, he was constantly doing it. My grandparents used to drag me to the museums and galleries, and I remember seeing Van Goghs and all these masterpieces—they were trying to culture me, which really didn't work, but... *(Laughter.)* I just remember being there and, even as young as I was—eight or nine—I knew there was an art movement in comics at the same time they were trying to show me these masterpieces.

In fifty years, Jack's work is going to demand the prices that we see for those classics in fine art. I really believe that. He was that magic that came in to show us the roadway, the way to do comics right. He was doing crossovers, he was the first one to do double-page spreads—and, not just that, but the storytelling! The storytelling alone—and his poses! I think everything he did was just amazing.

You know, we talked about Ditko earlier. I think Ditko did the only thing that Jack couldn't have done, and that was Spider-Man.

STEVE: With Ditko, it was kinda like weakness was his strength in his storytelling: everything feels spidery, light looking and feathery. The people are small and wiry, totally the opposite of the spectrum from Jack.

SPOTLIGHT: I think they had a kinship, though. They had a bond throughout the years, even though they were stylistically very different.

STEVE: A lot of people are unaware that Ditko always felt like Jack helped him get his start in the industry. He went to Simon and Kirby, he worked for them and did a lot of un-credited inking, like on some of those *Black Magic* books.

SPOTLIGHT: What about you, Lisa? Growing up you weren't tuned in to it, but now, looking back, do you feel like you can give an opinion on it?

THIS MAN, THIS MONSTER: One of Jack's most sensitive splash pages, from the single issue most commonly referred to as the "best FF issue ever", from *FF #51.*

LISA: Oh, sure. You know, I knew my father was a highly intelligent individual; he lived in his head. Living with him, though, I found him

somewhere else.

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible] you can be edgy without being evil. I mean, they're bounty hunters, and you've got to be tough to be bounty hunters. You've got to have a little kernel of "bad dude" in you to be able to find the bad dudes, right? You think that's a fair assessment?

STEVE: And these guys were then, absolutely. Skylla was pretty bad as far as I'm concerned. She wants to go get 'em!

LISA: And you know, they're enjoying the battles, because they're almost borderline personalities, like they almost want the other way. I think of them almost like The Mad Squad. *(Laughter.)* They kinda reformed themselves.

STEVE: Other than Jack Berkley, of course... he doesn't seem to be particularly harsh, he just has a lot of talent and strength.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, Jack Berkley is a bounty hunter, so let's talk about him. His character is a direct correlation to Jack, and Jack's wife Rose is correlated to Roz, right? You having a lot of fun with that?

LISA: Oh yeah! It was definitely interesting when we would sit and brainstorm and have these little sessions. At first I didn't even realize we were going to do a comic book, it was just kind of putting a presentation package together, pitching it, and seeing if it's something we can do. And the story just evolved from there. It was just a lot of fun. Just sitting with these guys is a lot of fun!

MIKE: It just kept growing!

LISA: We'd start throwing ideas around and it would get longer and longer and longer... *(Laughter.)*

MIKE: And Jack started other stories that had nothing to do with this. This is where we cheated a little bit. We'd take a concept he was doing

COMES A HERO: Garrett Berkley doesn't know it yet, but he's about to be forced into some shoes he never thought he would fit into...or want to fit into! (From *GBH #1.*)

GBH Creators, from left to right: Steve Robertson, Richard French, Lisa Kirby and Mike Thibodeaux.

out, it was just roughly laid out, and I'd think, "This would fit so well with what we're doing here."

had laid out?

"Oh, this would work really well here. Let's incorporate this image in here, or this character."

SPOTLIGHT: duties, right?

STEVE: Mike is doing it the Marvel way, where Mike will break the story down and put it into panels. And he'll rough in dialogue and his thoughts for narration. Sometimes we'll talk while he's doing it. Other times he'll just give Lisa and I the pages once he's roughed it out, and we'll go over them. Then we'll get together and he'll tell us, talk about our ideas, and just try and use what we think is best. Often when we do that we come up with a third thing that's better yet. Sometimes Rick will have something he can throw in that's better. So the printed product really comes from all of us. But I'd say the greatest credit has got to go to Mike doing all that breakdown, breaking it down into panel storytelling.

LISA: Yeah, I agree. He's put in a lot of hours.

STEVE: It's hard to describe, but putting that story into panels is a real major part of it.

SPOTLIGHT: *Galactic Bounty Hunters* has a character named Garrett, who is the young son of Jack and Rose Barkley. So how close of a correlation is his character to you?

LISA: I didn't intend it to actually be that way. Maybe subconsciously. Garrett in the story, he's just rolling his eyes at his dad, and he's like, "Oh dad, you're not cool, you're a geek," and I thought, you know how you are when you're a teenager. I did a lot of eye-rolling, like, "*What* is he talking about *now*?" *(Laughter)*

STEVE: And Jack would be this way (like the character in the comic)! If somebody kidnaps his kid, he's going to get in a ship, he's going to do everything in his power to bring that boy home! So I thought there were a lot of strong ties here. A lot of metaphors.

LISA: And like I said, it wasn't really planned that way.

SPOTLIGHT: Reading the comic, and seeing Garrett living in frustration because his dad seems lost in some other world, that's why I asked if you had any little resentments at not having your dad around because he was stuck in the basement behind a table. So is there any subtle psychology working its way in?

LISA: Maybe it was therapy! *(Laughter)*

MIKE: You said it made you feel better after you were finished with it.

LISA: No, especially after my mom passed, there was a lot of grief, and it was a nice healing process to be able to do something like this, and participate somewhat in the work that he did. Because growing up, I felt like I was sort of creative; I was involved in music, and I enjoyed writing

TAKE A PENCIL AND TELL THE TRUTH:

A CONVERSATION WITH MARK EVANIER

At this year's San Diego Comic Convention, the world's biggest and greatest show of its type and one that Jack Kirby had a great hand in helping establish, I was fortunate enough to visit my first ever Jack Kirby Tribute Panel. This panel is a yearly event in which fans fill up a huge panel hall and listen in on a host of comic industry veterans — legends in their own right — all talking about one of their favorite subjects: Jack "The King" Kirby! This year, con attendees were treated to reveries from George Perez, Neal Adams, Mike Royer, and John Romita, Sr., all of whom gave their personal and heartfelt testimony on behalf of Jack and his influence on their creative and personal lives.

And every year, there is one man who presides over these panels with such aplomb that even soul star James Brown has to defer his title as Hardest Working Man in Show Business. Every year in San Diego, Mark Evanier can be found racing across the convention floor from hall to hall, his panel itinerary packed from morning to night with moderating duties. For many years, Mark was Jack's personal assistant, and he is as authoritative a figure as you'll find on the many different facets of Jack's history and artistic legacy, so he makes a natural fit to host the yearly Jack Kirby Tribute panels. Thankfully, we were able to catch up with him after his panel moderating had finished, and we talked about a subject dear to both our hearts.

SPOTLIGHT: It's been well known among Kirby fan circles that you have been writing a biography about the life and art of Jack Kirby for some time now. Where are you at with this project right now?

MARK: The book has been almost done for some time. What's happening is that I keep finding new data. I keep thinking, "Oh my God, I'm glad I didn't publish this last year, because I didn't have this new information." I've also held off because this is so important, I want to get it right. I'm polishing and polishing. I keep rewriting stuff that I had written ten years ago. There's no rush; you know, Jack's not going to get any deader. But every week I add a few more pages here and there. I'm being way too fussy about it.

SPOTLIGHT: One plan for the book's publication that you spoke of before was to publish two different versions of the biography: a single volume for the general fan, and a massive, two-volume tome for the hardcore fan. Is that concept still in play?

MARK: I don't know. I've been approached about doing a book of Jack's art, and that might wind up being the more accessible version, so I don't know. When I took this on, I got a lot of offers from publishers who wanted to publish it, but I thought that would be handcuffing me. The minute I take someone's contract, I am

going to have to deliver the book when they want it as opposed to when I feel done with it, so I decided not to take any deal. I know I can get this published when it's done to my satisfaction.

The idea of doing two volumes hit me when I realized how I was getting way too into it- one day I had sat there and typed up 28 pages about the plot of one issue of the *Challengers of the Unknown*. I said, well, this is important to some people, but not to everyone. But I just don't know.

SPOTLIGHT: Maybe you could find a home for that kind of stuff in other areas, like maybe your website? There are a lot of fans who would look forward to reading up on that brand of historical arcana.

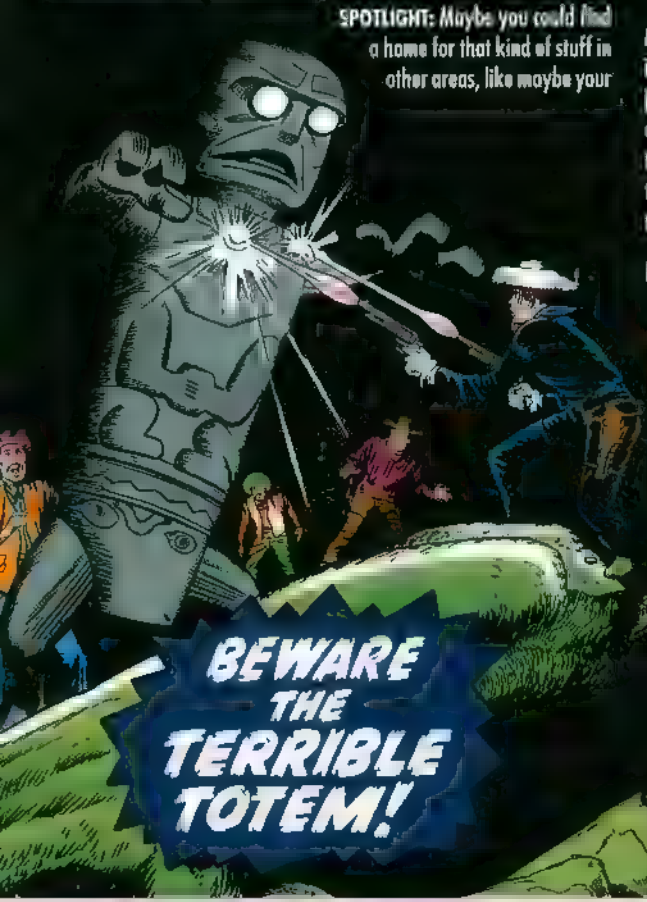
MARK: I think I might end up doing a lot of the real trivial stuff for the *Jack Kirby Collector*.

SPOTLIGHT: Speaking of the *Jack Kirby Collector*, I'm wondering if there are any other resources out there that do an effective job of sharing Jack's life and legacy with readers?

MARK: The *Tales to Astonish* book by Ronin Ro has a lot of major flaws in it, but I was impressed with quite a bit of it, and I thought he did a good job given that he was an outsider and that he didn't have access to A lot of people go from A to B to C to D. But there are aspects of Jack's story that have never been told, and I feel privileged to have been witness to them. Jack was always kind of counting on me to preserve these things, I thought. He used to refer to me as his Boswell.

But you can get a certain overview of Jack's life by simply reading his comics, which fortunately are very accessible. So many of them are in print or coming back to print. But the minutiae, the material about his business dealings, his contractual problems – all that is very complicated and has to be laid out methodically to be understood. Somebody just came to me at this panel we just did, and they asked me, "Why did Jack leave Marvel?" But that's about a two-hour explanation! I gave the guy a completely inadequate answer – you have to understand what Marvel was doing, Jack's attitude to the material at the time; it's not an easy subject to deal with. One of the things I'm doing with the book is that I'm trying to simplify it down to explain it without omitting anything.

SPOTLIGHT: You've written a lot of books in your career as a professional writer and comics historian, but have you ever done anything remotely like this?



RAWHIDE KIRBY! Jack drew this wonderfully evocative cover for *Rawhide Kid #22*, in which the Kid faces off against a walking totem pole!

It was kind of an undertaking, and I wasn't sure, and Mike kinda talked me into it a little bit, to give it a try. And I'm glad I did, but it's just kinda funny how the story turned out.

MIKE: I think your dad would have loved you doing this.

STEVE: Your mom and dad would be so proud of you.

SPOTLIGHT: And I think a lot of Jack's big fans are going to read this and feel a real sense of pride in you, too.

LISA: I think sometimes, "Gosh, I wish I'd paid more attention."

SPOTLIGHT: Do you feel comfortable in the role of "Lisa Kirby, comic book writer" yet? This must all be so new to you.

LISA: *(Pause.)* I'm trying. I keep thinking that I'm just a surfer from Ventura.

MIKE: I think she's doing great. She's got to fill up some huge, huge shoes. Heck, I wouldn't want to deal with it.

LISA: I don't want people to get the wrong idea that I'm trying to fill my father's shoes, or that I think I can be like him. That's ridiculous, that's really impossible. My concern was to put out a quality product that would be the best that it can be. I mean, his name is on it.

SPOTLIGHT: Are there plans to collect *Galactic Bounty Hunters* at some point?

MIKE: I think the plan is to do an oversize hardcover at some point.

SPOTLIGHT: How did Marvel get involved with publishing this project? Did you pitch it to them?

MIKE: Lisa, you wrote the email to them, right?

LISA: I was thinking as we were finishing the writing of the project, where do we go from here? It started basically with an email to Tom Brevoort. I think John Morrow suggested we try that. I have to give credit to him because he put the bug in my ear to do go this route.

STEVE: Marvel's response was really great, because right away they were very enthusiastic about it. Tom Brevoort especially was really great.

SPOTLIGHT: I know there has not been an always pleasant history between the Kirby family and Marvel.

MIKE: They mentioned that in our first conversation.

INTERVIEW CONTINUES ON THIRD PAGE FOLLOWING

MARK: Nothing this elaborate, and nothing where I am this passionate, no.

SPOTLIGHT: You have a lot to say about Jack, obviously, as your passion about him would dictate. What does this project mean to you on a personal level?

MARK: Jack was an amazing fellow, and as I just said at the Kirby Tribute panel, he meant a lot to me in a way that I'm still coming to understand after all these years that he's been gone. I learned a lot about comics from Jack, but I also learned a lot about people. Everything that he said was interesting, everything he drew was interesting, and Jack would make a comment on the news, or about something that he saw at the store, and it resonated and it had a meaning.

Everyone who met Jack knows that he spoke in a very odd way. His mind made odd connections and he jumped around. A lot of people would go from A to B to D to C. Jack would go from A to D, then do R, then come back to B; a lot of his greatest ideas were taking two or three different concepts that nobody would think of putting together and marrying them. Years later, I'd be in a completely different situation and I'd go, "Hey, this reminds me of something Jack said."

We're sitting here at the San Diego Convention, and Jack made a lot of predictions about what would happen with this convention and he was dead on right. There were times he would make a prediction -- and Jack would make a lot of predictions -- and we'd go, "Yeah, right Jack." But so much of what Jack predicted came true, and I had to learn to believe what he said to be true. He was so wise. People dismissed him so often because he had this odd way of speaking. He had this New York accent, which some people always take to indicate a low level of refinement, and although it was not immediately accessible, he would sometimes say something to me and I'd have no idea what he was talking about, and I'd humor him. And a week later, I'd recall, "Oh yeah, he was finishing a conversation we had had a week before and never got to finish!" It had been rattling around in his brain that whole time!

And he wrote stories the same way. One of the tragedies of the *New Gods* was that it never got finished. If he'd been able to finish, he would have tied up a lot of the things that he brought up in issue #3 and didn't make sense by issue #42, because he worked that way; he thought that way and he talked that way.

It's very important to me, feeling privileged to have known him, to be able to capture him warts and all -- there are things that will be in the book that will not be flattering to Jack -- but he would have wanted it that way. He was never afraid of the truth. Truth was a very big word with Jack. When people asked him for advice on how to draw comics, he would tell them, "Sit down at a drawing board, take a pencil and tell the truth." He was always confident that the truth would vindicate him, and that he would come off well, in a completely honest, candid portrait.

SPOTLIGHT: That is such a keen insight into the man, to know how vested he was in truth-telling while at the same time he was spinning these fantastic, crazy stories in his comics that at first glance would have no connection to the rational world we understand.

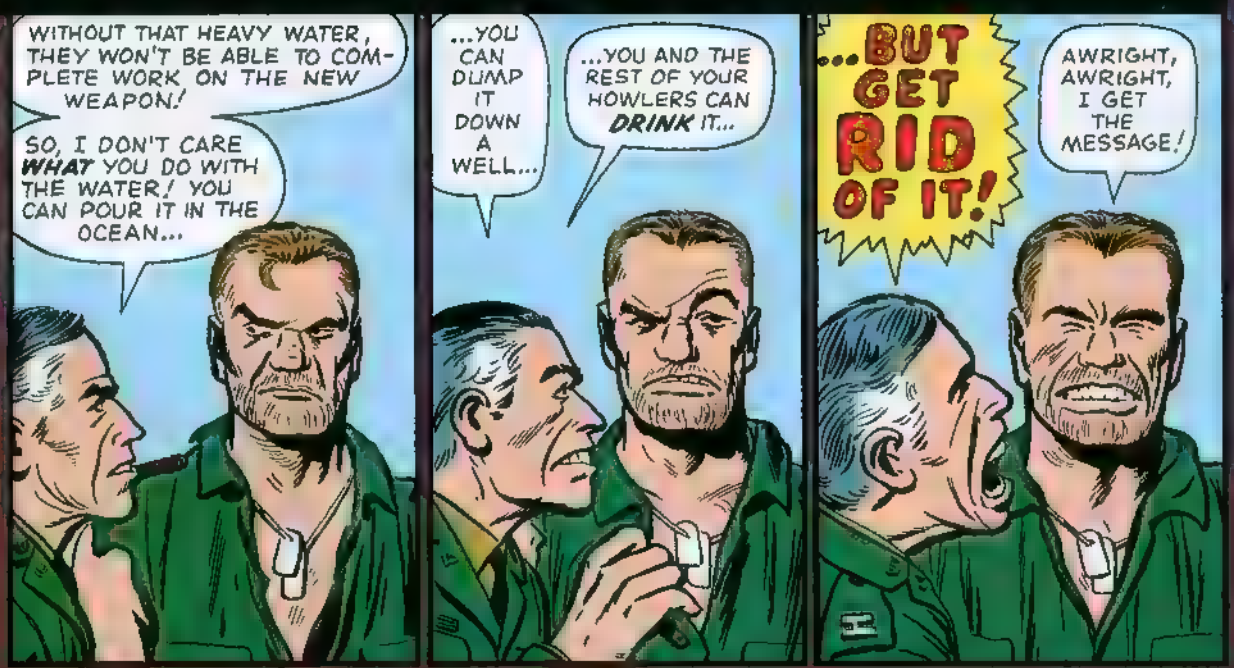
MARK: Yes, but the emotional truth is there. He may have been writing about Galactus, but he was actually thinking about corporate takeovers and mergers and such: the sentiments were true, the fear was true. Also, a lot of what he wrote about in Thor were things from his own life disguised as Norse gods and legends.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, Mark, thank you for talking with *Marvel Spotlight* about Jack and giving us an update on your book project. You're the card-carrying authority on Jack and his legacy.

MARK: But there are a lot of authorities on Jack. Somebody once told me, "You're working on the definitive book on Jack Kirby." No, I'm working on *my* book about Jack Kirby. But there should be a dozen books about Jack Kirby. There should be other people's views we get to look at. The word 'definitive' scares me; I think it's an arrogant word. Especially on a subject like Jack Kirby, where we should have many more books about him than the one I will write.

You can find out more about Jack Kirby at Mark's website, www.povonline.com.

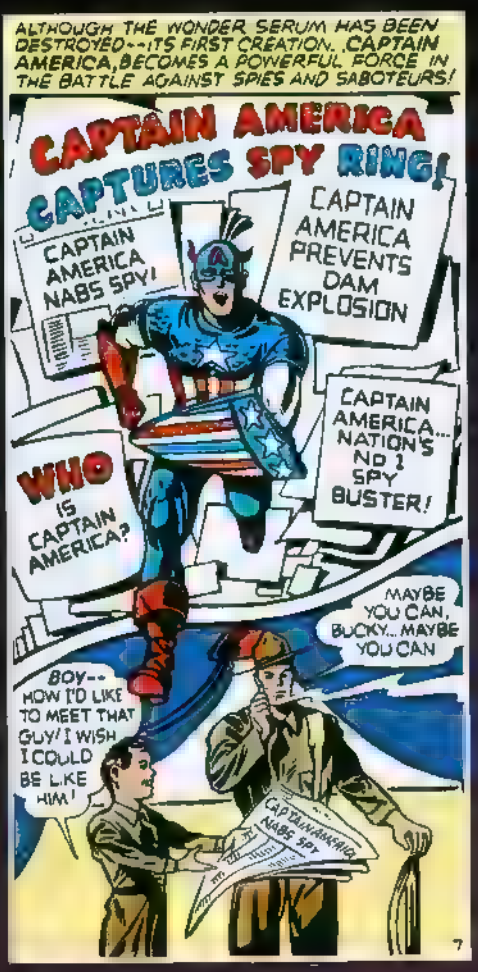
CLASSIC KIRBY: The cigar moving from Lt. "Happy Sam" Sawyer's mouth, to his hand, and then out of panel, the craning of his neck as he barks at Sgt. Fury, and Fury's raised eyebrows and then shell-shocked visage: this is comic art at its finest! (From *Sgt. Fury #2*)


WITHOUT THAT HEAVY WATER, THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO COMPLETE WORK ON THE NEW WEAPON!
SO, I DON'T CARE *WHAT* YOU DO WITH THE WATER! YOU CAN POUR IT IN THE OCEAN...
...YOU CAN DUMP IT DOWN A WELL...
...YOU AND THE REST OF YOUR HOWLERS CAN *DRINK* IT...
...BUT GET RID OF IT!
AWRIGHT, AWRIGHT, I GET THE MESSAGE!

SIMON, KIRBY AND CAPTAIN AMERICA

Before Lee and Kirby, there was. . .Simon and Kirby!

By Matt Adler


ALTHOUGH THE WONDER SERUM HAS BEEN DESTROYED--ITS FIRST CREATION, CAPTAIN AMERICA, BECOMES A POWERFUL FORCE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST SPIES AND SABOTEURS!
CAPTAIN AMERICA CAPTURES SPY RING!
CAPTAIN AMERICA NABS SPY!
CAPTAIN AMERICA PREVENTS DAM EXPLOSION
CAPTAIN AMERICA... NATION'S NO 1 SPY BUSTER!
WHO IS CAPTAIN AMERICA?
MAYBE YOU CAN, BUCKY... MAYBE YOU CAN
BOY-- HOW I'D LIKE TO MEET THAT GUY! I WISH I COULD BE LIKE HIM!
CAPTAIN AMERICA NABS SPY

A HERO FOR AMERICA: Joe and Jack deliver a hero that was right for the times: the star-spangled super-soldier, Captain America! From *Captain America Comics #1.*

"We had very similar ideas as to what we hoped to achieve."

The original Marvel duo of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby predated the Marvel Age of Comics - which began in 1961 with the creation of the *Fantastic Four* - by a couple decades, their legendary partnership having started all the way back in 1939, when Marvel was then known as Timely Comics. *Spotlight* had the chance to talk with Joe Simon - one half of that famous duo - about his partnership with Jack, his personal remembrances about the man, and their celebrated creation of Captain America.

Joe Simon and Jack Kirby first met while working for Golden Age publisher Fox Comics. Joe had just been hired by the company as an editor, while Jack was already working in the Fox bullpen at the time, doing clean-up chores, and drawing such strips as the *Blue Beetle*. They made an instant impression on one another. As Joe tells it, "My father was a tailor, so I came in a suit he had made for me. I was the first comic creator Jack had seen in a suit, and he was impressed. Jack's father was a tailor, too, but he made pants!"

Jack likewise made an impression on Joe, but for far different reasons than his fashion sense. "Right away, I was greatly impressed. Jack was maybe 22 years old when I met him, and I felt he was advanced artistically far beyond his age as an artist. He changed his style a lot over the years, but right from the start, I felt he made the most of his potential, which was considerable."

The collaboration proved to be extremely smooth for both of them. As Joe explains it, "I do not recall one incident where we didn't see eye-to-eye. As a collaborator, he had talents that I never expected to match. I had skills and experience that he was lacking. We had very similar ideas as to what we hoped to achieve. We were extremely happy with our products."

Although they came from similar backgrounds, Simon doesn't make too much of it. He sees the similarities as something that defined the industry and its participants as something very much a piece of the times. "It seemed that our whole generation - the comic book generation—was made up of struggling, working class guys, and we were proud of it! It's funny, we writers and artists were considered intellectual, but most of us did not go to college."

And times certainly were tough for struggling young artists in those days. Both Joe and Jack had to supplement their primary income by doing freelance work for other companies. This included Timely, the pre-cursor company to Marvel Comics. Eventually, this led to their fateful creation, the timeless American super-soldier.

As Joe tells it, "Jack was making 15 dollars a week at the time, and living on the Lower East Side. Eventually, I came up with Captain America and brought it to Martin Goodman at Timely. He just loved it. Captain America was actually the first hero that Timely launched in his own book." By this time, the Simon/Kirby team was well-established, and as Joe recalls, he did not view Jack merely as an artist, but as a collaborator in every sense of the word. "I was editing or art-editing for Timely on several other magazines, and I considered Jack as co-editor of the comics."

The early Captain America stories Simon and Kirby created were grounded very much in the real world, something which set them decidedly apart from their contemporaries, which were much later to the game in confronting fascism and Nazism from abroad. The stories were peppered with roles given to prominent historical figures of the time, including President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, Nazi

leader Adolf Hitler, and his second-in-command Hermann Goering. The stories also regularly showcased Captain America and his partner Bucky squaring off against real-life threats to the United States, including spies and saboteurs intent on hurting America's fledgling war effort. Many of the stories also centered around life in Camp Lehigh, where the heroes' non-costumed alter-egos, Steve Rogers and James Buchanan Barnes, resided and trained for deployment.

These kinds of stories stood in stark contrast to the more fantasy-based super-hero tales of most publishers of the time. One might think its creators were setting out to make a statement, but Simon says it wasn't conscious. "We were just trying to get interesting stories out. Both Jack and I loved to read; we'd go to the library and book stores and read all sorts of things, everything from the classic novels to the pulps, not to mention the newspapers and listening to the radio. I also worked as a columnist for the Hearst newspapers when I was 18 years old." Although, Simon does admit, "Like so many others, we were ticked off at Hitler and wanted to get our two cents in."

The Simon/Kirby partnership continued for a long time after they moved away from their seminal star-spangled creation. They went on to create many more notable properties, particularly for rival publisher DC. Among those were *Newsboy Legion*, *Boy Commandos*, and *Manhunter*, as well as a run on *Sandman*. They are also widely credited with creating the field of romance comics, most notably the popular title *Young Romance*.

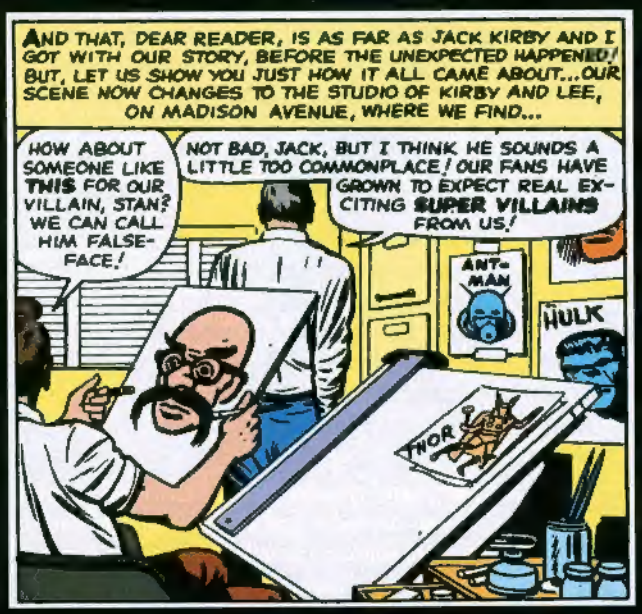
But as all good things tend to, the Simon/Kirby partnership finally came to an end in 1955, after more than 15 years. Far from a natural end, this came amidst the well-publicized, anti-comics hysteria fueled by adolescent psychiatrist Frederic Wertham and the Congressional scrutiny that followed. Simon recounts, "This was around the time of the Kefauver hearings. Mothers, mostly those who belonged to churches and PTAs, formed groups and were organizing boycotts. They claimed comics were harmful to children. The Senate even held nationally televised hearings. The industry really suffered, and many publishers had to fold up.

"At one point, Jack and I formed our own company called Mainline, where we would package complete books and then sell them to other publishers. At the time, we were being distributed by a company called Leader News. Leader's main source of income was distributing horror publisher EC Comics. When EC folded as a result of all the controversy, Leader shut down as well. That in turn made us close up. It was a bad time all around."

Simon subsequently moved into advertising and commercial art, while Kirby – as we all know – returned to Timely/Marvel, then called Atlas. He eventually collaborated with Stan Lee on the *Fantastic Four*, a creation that would change the world of comics forever. Simon and Kirby did later go on to collaborate on a few more projects, even after the heyday of their partnership had passed, but despite the sudden end to their ongoing collaboration, Simon still looks back on it with great fondness. He sums up their relationship by saying, "We were a comics machine, and we actually liked one another."

In the end, what more can one ask for?

You can read much more about the Simon/Kirby experience in Joe's autobiographical book, *The Comic Book Makers*, and you can visit Joe's website at www.simoncomics.com.


AND THAT, DEAR READER, IS AS FAR AS JACK KIRBY AND I GOT WITH OUR STORY, BEFORE THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENED! BUT, LET US SHOW YOU JUST HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT...OUR SCENE NOW CHANGES TO THE STUDIO OF KIRBY AND LEE, ON MADISON AVENUE, WHERE WE FIND...
HOW ABOUT SOMEONE LIKE THIS FOR OUR VILLAIN, STAN? WE CAN CALL HIM FALSE-FACE!
NOT BAD, JACK, BUT I THINK WE SOUNDS A LITTLE TOO COMMONPLACE! OUR FANS HAVE GROWN TO EXPECT REAL EXCITING SUPER VILLAINS FROM US!
ANT-MAN
HULK
THOR

IT AVAILED YOU NOTHING--
BUT, IN MY HANDS, THIS MATCHLESS, ALL-ENCOMPASSING COSMIC POWER SHALL ENSLAVE AN ENTIRE PLANET--AND, AFTER THAT--PERHAPS A UNIVERSE, AS WELL!
NEVER! IT WILL NOT BE--IT MUST NOT BE--!

Kirby and Lee had fun placing themselves in the action of *FF #10* to meet one of their great creations (left image), but when the Surfer met Doctor Doom (from *FF #59*, right image), it was no laughing matter!

STEVE: They wanted to make the point that they were not the people at the company that Jack felt didn't treat him properly. The company is not like the evil empire in Star Wars that never ends. These are different people. They're fans, too. But we've had an interesting reaction from some people, like, "You're working with Marvel?" But we point out that we have full ownership of the characters, full control, and it's altogether a different time and different people.

LISA: Being under Icon, it makes it all creator-owned. It's important to keep things positive. Take a negative and turn it into a positive, and this is one great way of doing that. I feel like, with Marvel too, my dad did some of his best work there.

MIKE: For anybody that has a complaint, it really irritates me, because they really don't know, they just start talking but they really don't have a clue what's going on behind the scenes. Try to have a little bit of distance.

SPOTLIGHT: Mike, you were around during the *Captain Victory* era, working side-by-side with Jack and inking his pages, and it was specifically during issue #7 of *Captain Victory* that these characters were supposed to appear. You actually talked to Jack about these characters as he was developing them.

MIKE: Yes, and didn't think much of it at the time. I can't remember too much of what he said, but it just reminds me that I should have listened more than I did. But Lisa found these characters while she was doing an inventory of Jack's art, and when she saw those penciled pages, she said, "Wow! These are great!" It hit her right then and we set them aside.

LISA: It's really fun, actually, to find these little treasures. I even found a sketch of myself as a kid, I never knew it existed and all of a sudden it falls out of a drawer.

SPOTLIGHT: The first issue of *Galactic Bounty Hunters* is balanced between stuff that happens on Earth and stuff that is happening in outer space. Is the rest of the series going to take place in outer space?

STEVE: Yes, all the rest of the action takes place in outer space.

SPOTLIGHT: And the six issues tell a complete beginning-to-ending story?

STEVE: Yes, it all wraps up at the end.

SPOTLIGHT: Will it perhaps launch a sequel?

STEVE: That's what we hope. This story kind of tells the origin, puts all the pieces in place for the characters to evolve. It makes a place for Garrett's own adventures.

SPOTLIGHT: Lisa, since Garrett is somewhat modeled after you, do you think you'd want to be a bounty hunter in real life?

LISA: I'm not tough enough!

SPOTLIGHT: *(To Lisa's boyfriend, Gary)* What do you think, Gary? Does Lisa have what it takes. *(Gary smiles and shakes his head "No.")*

MIKE: I gotta tell you, if anybody messes with her out in the water, they gotta deal with him!

LISA: I'm a little on the mellow side, but I have my moments! *(Laughter.)* But as far as the story goes – as far as being like Garrett – again, it was just really like me sitting around the table and hearing his war stories that my mom and I had heard a million times, so it was more along the lines of that than any idea to be a tough guy.

STEVE: We were hoping to make a little point, too, about your parents, that when you're young you're so full of yourself but you reach a point in your life that you realize that there was a lot to be said for your parents that you never thought of at the time.

SPOTLIGHT: That was a trademark of your dad's work: he would base things in real human relationships. He would go off on tangents, go off across the universe, but he always had some concern for the human condition.

MIKE: We talked about that while we were doing it, to make sure that it had a link to that about Jack.

SPOTLIGHT: Let me ask you, Mike, since you're the artist: what are the elements that have to be in place if you're going to do an authentic Kirby-style comic?

MIKE: That's what I think we did here. I hope. I do remember Jack telling me, because I would go over there and draw stuff just like him, and he would tell me, "Don't do this, don't do this! Develop what's in you, develop what you're feeling. Don't look at my stuff, don't look at someone else's."

He did tell me to study anatomy, but he was right. People try and knock off his style…

SPOTLIGHT: There's more to it than just his figure drawings, there is the perspective, the balance of the characters as they're laid out across the page…

MIKE: It's a tough thing to put into words, I sure can't. But it just seems to be there. I try not to analyze it too much.

SPOTLIGHT: For you, it's probably more of an organic thing anyway, since you worked so long and so closely with Jack.

MIKE: I think it is. It's all I ever think about all the time, too. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Are there any particular artists out there right now that, in your opinion, do Kirby right? And again, I don't mean aping him, but I mean bringing the spirit Jack brought to comics.

MIKE: Barry Windsor-Smith. He started out copping Jack big time, but once he hit his own style, he really took off. He's just a great storyteller. Keith Giffen is another one. Some of the things he was doing there in the '70s seemed to me to be like a modern style of Jack. And I don't know why, because it doesn't look like Jack at all, but Arthur Adams' art really reminds me of what Jack was doing. Erik Larsen, he's like a modern Kirby.

SPOTLIGHT: Mike, you drew a lot of Galactic Bounty Hunters with your left hand, which is notable because you're right handed!

MIKE: It happened during the earthquake in 1994. There was a bookshelf that fell over, and I remember lifting it up, getting it back up, and then another aftershock came and knocked it back down and I remember trying to stop it and it hit by arm in a spot that seemed to be a problem. I think the worst part was that I was drawing about 12-14 hours a day, I would put a lot of work in, and the more I drew, the more irritating it got. I couldn't sleep at night it got so bad. For years, I stuck it in a brace, and some doctors told me that it wasn't even going to come back.

SPOTLIGHT: Okay, as we wind up, is there anything else you'd like to add concerning your feelings about Jack Kirby, his legacy, and what he means to you?

LISA: I think my parents are probably smiling down, laughing at this all. "She's at a comic book convention!" They loved coming to San Diego, they'd talk about it for weeks, and they'd always ask me to come and I'd say, "No, I'm not gonna go. I can't handle it, I'm not gonna go!" And now here I am, and I'm having fun! You never know where life is gonna take you. And I gotta give these guys credit, and Rick who isn't here, because this would not have happened without them. I definitely applaud them.

STEVE: When we were talking about all the fans coming to visit him at the house, and Jack going through all his discourses with them about philosophy and stuff like that, it reminds me that I spent a lot of years being one of those geeky fans up there bothering him all the time. I remember one time when me and Mike were there, I'd feel a little bit guilty being up there for hours taking up all his time, realizing he probably needed to do a lot of work. I remember telling him, "Well, we really ought to go because we're taking up all your time." And Roz said, "No, no. He needs this. He loves talking to people." But what I noticed after that was I would see some of the things we had talked about reflected back to me in the comics.

At that time, he was doing *Devil Dinosaur*, and Jack and I had been talking about creation myths and the Bible, whether they were meant to be taken literally or just to represent ideas, and then a few months down the road, here's this story in *Devil Dinosaur* about Adam and Eve and the tree in the garden. I began to note this in his work, that his mind – whenever he was talking to people – his mind was always working and taking things in.

MIKE: The other thing I was thinking about was when you mentioned that you had this concept of Jack's house being like this wild, crazy place. I was in an American Lit class in 11th grade, and I'll never forget the teacher asking us who we would like to talk to that was either living or dead. I remember someone saying Einstein, all the way to Jesus. I get up, and I'm thinking, "Jack Kirby!" And the teacher says, "I'm not aware of who that is." And I tell them it's the guy who draws *Fantastic Four* and *Captain America*. I hear some people snickering and now I'm sweating it because I'm a cool kid up 'til now, but I'm gonna be labeled "the geek!" I tried to explain it to everyone – even though I was embarrassed and red as a beet – that Jack Kirby was the guy who I wanted to meet! He was like Jesus! *(Laughter.)*

We met him at a convention in '73 in LA, and we were talking to him. First of all, I walk in and I'm expecting to see this huge giant of a man, and you see him and it's like, "That's him?" But he's the friendliest guy, and by the end of the conversation, Steve asks him, "Can we come up and see you?" And Jack says, "Sure!" And we ask, "Can we get your phone number?" And Jack says, "It's in the phone book!" I'm thinking, "Oh my God! Jesus' number is in the phone book!" *(Laughter.)*

Thanks to the creative team of Jack Kirby's Galactic Bounty Hunters for talking about Jack Kirby with us! This six-issue mini-series has already shipped the first two issues to retailers, so take a trip to your local comic shop and hunt those down! Then settle in for the rest of the run, which will conclude before the year is out!

ARISE, FOR KING BLACK BOLT AND THE INHUMANS! Jack's Inhumans were imbued with a powerful sense of royal propriety and regal stature – not to mention typical Kirby power!

BULLPEN BULLETINS

ITEM! For crying out loud! You can stop mailing in the letters! Stop leaning out your windows and yelling! Stop typing up a storm on the comic-book message boards! We heard you give us the what for enough times that we almost forgot what it was for to begin with! But in a single moment of clarity, we remembered what it was you wanted: ULTIMATE MARVEL TEAM-UP ULTIMATE COLLECTION TPB! Tired of hunting down that long out-of-print hardcover collection and weary of looking for all the assorted trades? Well just pick up that little telephone of yours, call your local comic shop and reserve your copy now, because we're winging a 448-page brain-buster of a trade paperback your way that reprints *Ultimate Marvel Team-Up #1-16* — every single issue! — plus the *Ultimate Spider-Man Super Special!* Join Brian Michael Bendis and Spider-Man as they take a romp through the Ultimate Universe, teaming up the wall-crawler with special guests like Wolverine, Dr. Strange, Black Widow and Iron Man, and connecting comics' top writer with art talent like Bill Sienkiewicz, David Mack, Ted McKeever, and Mike Allred! It's the book of the year (from a few years back, natch) and it's back! Now quit yellin', will ya?!?!?

ITEM! Oh mercy! Two Masterworks in the month of September? You bet your bottom dollar, bunky, so make sure you have enough of those dollars when it comes time to shell out for ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOL. 1 and AMAZING SPIDER-MAN VOL. 8, both sure to be Masterworks Manufactured of the Most Marvelous of Molds! You want a heavy dose of classic Atlas Era art — with scary and suspenseful stories by Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Don Heck, Bill Everett, and more — all with those patented O. Henry endings that Stan Lee was famous for? Then you'll want to read *Tales of Suspense #1-10*, reprinted in full-color glory in *Tales of Suspense Masterworks Vol. 1!* And it's been a long wait for webheads, but the eighth volume of Spider-Man Masterworks is web-swinging your way, reprinting *Amazing Spider-Man #68-77* and the rare classic *Marvel Super-Heroes #14*, the first drawings of Spidey by Ross Andru! Call the bank and take out a loan if you have to! Tell 'em it's for Masterworks — they'll understand!

FAN'S SOAPBOX

So I was visiting my therapist the other day, and while lying on his couch, I said to him, "Doc Forbush, I keep worrying about my reprint collections! A line starts up and I'm always worried it's never gonna finish!" What did he say about that? Well, he didn't say much, but that's a Brand Ecch-certified psychiatrist for ya! At least the money I save on bargain brain-shrinking can go to my Marvel collected-editions budgets, because any psychic strain about "completionism" is being handled by the angels in the Collected Editions Department at the House of Ideas.

Coming soon are the following titanic tomes that bring closure to your collected comics: X-MEN: COMPLETE AGE OF APOCALYPSE EPIC BOOK 4 TPB, a 368-page trade paperback that reprints the last several hundred pages of this mid-'90s crossover classic featuring writing and art by Mark Waid, Warren Ellis, Chris Bachalo, Mike McKone, Bryan Hitch, the Kubert Brothers, and many more!

And speaking of crossovers, you'll get some cosmic closure with AVENGERS: GALACTIC STORM VOL. 2 TPB, the second of two massive trade paperbacks that collect a whole buncha Avengers and Avenger solo titles that will show you what happens when the super-powered beings of two galaxies collide! It's a Big Bang, let me tell ya! This one doesn't lack for the creative star power, either, what with folks like Roy Thomas, Paul Ryan, Tom DeFalco, Mark Gruenwald, Steve Epting, and Greg Capullo involved!

And while Marvel celebrates the tenth anniversary of Heroes Reborn (with a new series by ace creators Jeph Loeb and Rob Liefeld, no less), Marvel brings the Heroes Reborn line of trades to a close with some big, fat trade paperbacks reprinting HEROES REBORN: CAPTAIN AMERICA, by Rob Liefeld, Jeph Loeb, Joe Bennett, and James Robinson, and HEROES REBORN: IRON MAN, by Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio, Scott Lobdell, and that Loeb guy again! Each of these trades collects all twelve issues, clocking in at a massive 336 pages, and will join the previously released HEROES REBORN: FANTASTIC FOUR TPB and HEROES REBORN: AVENGERS TPB to give you a complete library's worth!

Finally, consider this: it's possible — I'm not saying it's definite or even likely — but merely *possible* that you're a fan of Jack "The King" Kirby. Now...couldn't be! But maybe — just maybe — you know someone who is! Well, November will also see the release of the third of three trade paperback collections that will reprint the complete run of Jack's late-'70s *Captain America and the Falcon* run! Yep, that's right! Reprinting *Captain America #206-214* and *Annuals #3-4* comes CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE FALCON: THE SWINE TPB! And that's just the perfect title for pigging out on Jack Kirby's Cap, breakfast, lunch, dinner, and desert!

Closure, baby! Stick with the Marvel "Closure" Editions Department and maybe you can quit paying those visits to the couch of Doc Forbush!

NEXT ISSUE

ONSLAUGHT REBORN

HEROES REBORN

STAN LEE MEETS...
SPIDER-MAN
DOCTOR STRANGE
THE THING
DOCTOR DOOM
SILVER SURFER
SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 2006

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